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Foreign Minister David Levy (right) meets yesterday at the Foreign Ministry with US Ambassador Martin Indyk. Levy said the US should "not lend a hand to the drama orchestrated by Arafat which is aimed at putting Israel on trial," according to an Israeli official. Indyk said US Consul-General Edward Abington would attend the international meeting in Gaza planned for Saturday. (Reuters)

Inner cabinet to meet over crisis

By **JOH IMMANUEL, LIAT COLLINS, HILLEL KUTTNER,** and news agencies

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu is to convene the inner cabinet today to discuss the growing crisis with the Palestinians, including Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat's intention of holding an international conference in Gaza this weekend on the peace process.

Netanyahu, who returned last night from a two-day visit to Russia, is to confer with Foreign Minister David Levy before the cabinet meeting for an update on Levy's meeting with US Ambassador Martin Indyk. He is also to meet with Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai regarding his visit to Jordan and his talks with settlers over the implementation of the first phase of the IDF pullback in Judea and Samaria.

Netanyahu said yesterday he was "fed up" with accusations that Israeli actions were hurting the chances for peace in the Middle East.

"I'm getting, frankly, fed up with the idea that everything we do is a violation of the [peace] agreement, and everything the Palestinians say is in compliance with the agreement," he told a news conference at the end of his visit to Moscow.

"A few months ago we were accused of burrowing a tunnel under the Al Aqsa Mosque - preposterous fabrication," Netanyahu said. "It should have been thrown out by the international community, thrown out by the international press. It was given credence, this lie."

"I'm not going to accept this same kind of approach again and again," he said. "If the Palestinians are serious about peace, let them sit down with us. If they are serious about airing their differences, let them sit down with us."

"Every time we do something that is not in their eyes, what they want, they don't say 'Let's come to the table,' ... they immediately create a crisis," Netanyahu said.

Arafat said yesterday he hopes a meeting of US, European, and Arab envoys would rescue Middle East peace from a crisis over Israeli settlement plans in the West Bank.

Asked why he had called the

meeting for Saturday in the Gaza Strip, Arafat told reporters in English: "To protect the peace process... and to face the breaching of [the agreement by] the Israelis."

The US, Israel's closest ally, on Tuesday tightened the noose of international pressure by agreeing to send an envoy to the meeting.

"Chairman Arafat obviously feels the need to talk to friendly countries around the world, and that's appropriate," said State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns.

The US supports the meeting, another senior administration figure said in Washington, because it is an opportunity for the Palestinians to vent their anger regarding recent Israeli decisions on Har Homa and further redeployment.

This is especially so after the US vetoed last Friday's UN Security Council decision condemning the planned construction of a Jewish neighborhood on Jerusalem's Har Homa.

A second US official said the administration does not view Arafat's event as a "conference," but as a "meeting of the countries present at the signing of the interim agreement."

"We do not regard this as a mechanism for resolving disputes. That has to be done by the parties," he said.

Representatives of the US, Russia, the European Union, Japan, Norway, Egypt, and Jordan are expected to attend the meeting.

Meanwhile, while Arafat may be boycotting the government, he welcomed more than 100 Israeli businessmen to Gaza yesterday. The meeting with the group of businessmen signified that social relations with Israel, and continuing relations at military level, were not to be confused with government-to-government problems, since Arafat is convinced that Israeli public opinion and even the IDF supports his position.

Addressing the group in a large

room in his Gaza headquarters, he spoke about the need for a "peace of the brave." He did not mention Netanyahu, with whom he is currently refusing to speak, but talked about the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin. "We should walk in his footsteps," he said.

Although the meeting is not the Madrid-style international conference which Foreign Minister David Levy said Tuesday could lead to a freezing of the peace process, it is clear that Arafat wants it to create an international consensus. That would make it easier to confront what he considers to be unilateral Israeli decisions, which strengthen Netanyahu's position in his government by humiliating him.

"We've got to negotiate from the position of equals," Amit Leshin, a Labor Party organizer who brought the businessmen to Gaza, quoted PA officials as saying.

PA cabinet secretary Ahmed Abdel-Rahman denied that the diplomats' meeting is designed to embarrass Israel. "I'm astonished by [Israel's] refusal to come to this conference," he said. "They should come and commit themselves to peace as well. President Arafat is trying to save the peace process and that is very clear to the world."

The PA is confident that if Israel did attend, it would be like the defendant in the dock and its participation would enhance the appearance of an international peace conference.

The very personal and contemptuous letter from King Hussein of Jordan to Netanyahu was especially pleasing to Arafat, since Netanyahu has often said that good relations with Jordan do not depend on good relations with Arafat.

Hussein had been shocked by the Israel-PLO accord at Oslo and was not unhappy at Netanyahu's election victory.

"Jordan finds that Israeli policy will destroy peace in the Middle East, not only between Palestine and Israel," Abdel-Rahman said. "It will destroy peace with Jordan and Egypt, and normalization with the Arab world will end."

The warm atmosphere of the meetings held by the businessmen belied the crisis atmosphere in PA-Israel relations, said Leshin.



ANALYSIS

International conference or gimmick?

By **DAVID MAKOVSKY**

When the Madrid peace conference convened in 1991, the glittering, historic gathering was attended by, among others, then-US president George Bush, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, then-prime minister Yitzhak Shamir and foreign ministers of surrounding Arab countries, including Syria and Lebanon.

The rules of Madrid were crafted carefully over many months, as Israel sought to ensure that such an august body not impose a peace deal, but rather allow negotiations to unfold naturally.

This week, the Palestinians have announced they are convening an "international conference" in Gaza, but it does not resemble Madrid in any fashion.

On one hand, Israel should view the meeting as expressing broad international concern about the future of the peace process and, therefore, not be dismissive.

But it would be a major error to elevate this meeting into some form of Madrid II. While the Palestinians want to conjure up this association, it is in fact more like a glorified public-relations briefing that Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat will be holding for ambassadors and consul-generals with a little pomp, long-winded speeches and perhaps a statement at the end, but even this is unclear.

As Labor leader Shimon Peres bristled yesterday, "Arafat has met with diplomats many times before, so he will do it one more time. This does not make it an international conference."

US Ambassador Martin Indyk was cited as saying in a meeting with Foreign Minister David Levy yesterday, "This is a periodic meeting that Arafat has in Gaza. Nothing more." He later said it was "ridiculous" to call it an international conference.

The Palestinians are looking for gimmicky media mileage and hope to find it by calling

this an "international conference." Their interest is understandable. What is less understandable is that Israel, in the words of one western diplomat, "is playing into Arafat's hands" by denouncing the event as an international conference when it is little more than a briefing.

Once Foreign Minister David Levy slammed the session as an "international conference" that Israel would fight since it could "freeze the peace process," the story was blared on the front pages. By highlighting the issue, Levy gave Arafat another success, as if he were able to summon heads of state from throughout the world at a minute's notice to an "international conference."

Only yesterday in Moscow, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu lowered the tone, saying he would not object if Arafat held yet another briefing for diplomats.

It is not in Israel's interest to turn an Arafat gimmick into something it is definitely not.

Haredim harass Jehovah's Witnesses

By **HAIM SHAPIRO**

A congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Lod has been the victim of a campaign of violent harassment by haredim, apparently Habad hassidim. This culminated Saturday night, when a mob ransacked the congregation's meeting hall and sang and danced around a bonfire of Bibles and religious literature, members of the Christian congregation reported yesterday.

The Jehovah's Witnesses believe it is their religious duty to convince others of the truth of their beliefs.

"What we do is go around and talk to people about the Bible," said Mark Einstein, a spokesman for the movement. He said it has 750 to 800 active members, with another 1,000 who attend services. The Lod congregation, which is adjacent to a Habad neighborhood and school, has about 50 members.

According to Albin Neupert, a member of the Lod group, the first attacks on the congregation began in November. Then, he said, there was quiet until another attack came two weeks ago on Saturday night.

As one family tried to leave, they were met with a barrage of stones. A man, 60, was hit in the head and had to be taken to the hospital for treatment. Members of the group called the police from inside, but the squad car arrived with only two policemen,

who could not control the mob, Neupert said.

Eventually, he added, three more police cars arrived, but they, too, could do nothing. The police finally told the worshippers to leave despite the stone-throwing. The worshippers, who filed a complaint with the police, were told that one man had been detained and then released.

During the next few days, Neupert said, the harassment continued with graffiti daubed on the building.

This past Saturday night there was no one in the hall, but witnesses from a nearby building reported that a mob of over 200 people dressed in haredi garb attacked the building. Neupert said the scene was one of total destruction. Chairs, the platform, the speaker's stand, the amplifying system and the acoustic tiles from the ceiling were all smashed in what appeared to be a frenzy of destruction, he said.

Neupert said that, according to a witness, the attackers sang and danced for about two hours around a bonfire of the literature and Bibles from the hall. According to the witnesses, the attackers sang, "Long live the messiah, the king."

Ramle-Lod deputy police chief Yossi Boker said the police had been called by bystanders. When officers arrived, he said, a crowd was still present but it was impossible to identify specific individuals as the assailants. The following day, he said, he had called in three rabbis from the neighborhood and warned them that if there was any interference with anyone's right to worship, the police would act to uphold the law.

IBA news fights for survival

By **ARYEH DEAN COHEN**

The Israel Broadcasting Authority's English news staffers are mounting a campaign to prevent the reported plans for their department's closure and the end of its daily English-language news broadcasts.

Israel Television head Yair Stern reportedly proposed shutting down IBA English News in an internal IBA document, as part of a series of steps he outlined recently to meet tightened IBA budgets.

"According to a report in the Hebrew press, Stern said the program costs NIS 1.5 million a year, plus 500 overtime hours a month. He suggested the broadcasts could be replaced by a five-minute daily news bulletin produced by the Hebrew department. Alternately, he suggested having the English news financed by the Tourism or Foreign Ministry."

But acting English news editor Steve Leibowitz said, "Doing away with the IBA [English] News would be an easy solution, rather than tackling the real problem - the elements in the building which don't produce what they cost."

Leibowitz said Stern "is just looking for ways to cut costs, to meet his budget," but noted that the English news department had already done its share after being asked to make cuts. He said reporter Sharon Isaac had left and was not replaced, while

senior political correspondent David Essing "was forced to go back to the radio" and would not be replaced either.

He added that the pool of 30 freelance-journalist days a month used to produce the broadcasts had been cut to 20, meaning staffers were now doing two or three times the amount of work they did before.

Leibowitz said the cost of IBA News in 1996 was NIS 1,724,000, while its 1997 budget stands at NIS 1.2m., although the departure of Essing and Isaac made it even less than that.

Leibowitz and his fellow staffers were incensed over not being called in to discuss the proposed closure of the department. Instead, they read about it in the newspaper.

"That's not the way to treat workers," Leibowitz said.

An Israel Television spokesman said there were no operative plans yet to close down the department. The IBA English News was founded in September 1990, and is the country's only English-language television news-cast. It airs a 15-minute broadcast at 6:15 on weekdays, and a 10-minute broadcast on Fridays and Saturdays.

It counts among its viewers tourists, diplomats, the foreign press and the estimated 100,000 native English-speakers in Israel. Staffers say the program also is watched regularly by Palestinians in the territories, and in Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Kahalani to consult A-G on closing PA offices

By **ELLI WOHLGELERTER and LIAT COLLINS**

Minister of Internal Security Avigdor Kahalani will consult today with Attorney-General Elyakim Rubinstein on the legality of closing four Palestinian offices in eastern Jerusalem.

Kahalani said yesterday the four offices under threat of closure are controlled by the Palestinian Authority, but as of last night he had not yet decided whether to close them.

"They are controlled by the PA, and I can tell you that the people who are working there get their salary from the PA and they are working for the PA," said Kahalani. "We have enough reason to close these offices."

"We are not looking to embarrass them or to try to work against the PA, but with all due respect towards them, they have to keep the agreement that we signed in Oslo. It is written that they are not allowed to work from Jerusalem."

The four offices are the Office for Small Projects, the Committee for the Wounded, the Welfare and Development Committee and the Office of National Institutions.

Final arguments against the closing of the offices were presented yesterday by PA legal representative Jawad Boulos to the ministry. Boulos had first met with legal representatives of the ministry on Monday to present

documents proving that the four offices were not affiliated with the PA.

Kahalani discussed the offices with the Knesset Interior Committee yesterday.

"I'm not scared to close them. I'll do it happily, but only in accordance with the law," Kahalani told the committee.

Committee yesterday.

"I'm not scared to close them. I'll do it happily, but only in accordance with the law," Kahalani told the committee.

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Gov't awaits OK for Har Homa

By ELLI WOHLGELERTER

The government will not begin building on Har Homa Sunday, because it wants to wait until after the High Court of Justice hears four petitions against the construction.

The court is scheduled to meet on Wednesday to hear the appeals. Deputy Housing Minister Meir Porush (United Torah Judaism) told the Knesset Interior Committee yesterday his ministry is prepared to begin work. Contracts have been signed with a construction firm, but Porush said work would not begin until the petitions have been heard, even though no injunction has been issued.

Asked about threats of violence over Har Homa, Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani said: "Anyone who grows tired of the struggle for Jerusalem should ask himself what he is doing here. The police are good and there are sufficient forces, and we are prepared for whatever we need to be prepared for. The struggle for Jerusalem is at a height at the moment, and the Har Homa construction is part of that struggle."

An injunction barring construction was requested on February 27 by MKs Haim Oron (Meretz) and

Avraham Poraz (Shinui-Meretz), the day after the government's ministerial committee on Jerusalem gave approval for building on Har Homa. The justice on duty postponed hearing that petition, moving instead to have the petition combined with two others that had previously been filed, and to have the petitions heard by a panel of three judges.

Following the judge's decision, the permit to begin construction on Har Homa was signed later that day by Labor and Social Affairs Minister Eli Yishai.

A fourth petition was then filed by Ir Shalem, an affiliate of Peace Now, on behalf of 29 people from Sur Bahir and Umm Tuba, according to Hagit Ya'ari, a spokeswoman for Peace Now. That appeal was combined with the other three.

The process by which building on Har Homa - or any new construction - can take place involves a 14-day waiting period after a building permit is signed. Then, work can begin. The 14-day period for Har Homa ends Sunday.

Ya'ari said the 14-day interval is the reason nothing has happened yet at Har Homa.

"When everyone said that [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu] is caving in to the

international pressure [not to build], it wasn't true. He legally can't build until two weeks pass. It's standard for any building."

Moshe Eilat, an advisor to the Ministry of Construction and Housing, which is in charge of building on Har Homa, said his ministry is "ready and eager" to start construction.

However, Eilat said, the ministry does not want to start on Sunday, "because then they will stop us, and we don't want them to stop us and then start again. We want that everything will be clear from a legal point of view."

He said he was confident that the petition would be rejected.

Within a day of the end of any legal issues, Eilat said, bulldozers could arrive on Har Homa and begin tearing up the ground. That should take about two weeks, he said, after which construction on infrastructure and housing will commence.

The work will be contracted out by the Housing Ministry, he said, but the overall administration is in the ministry's hands.

"We are in charge of everything, from A to Z," Eilat said. "We are responsible for everything."

Liat Collins contributed to this report.



Roadblock detail

Soldiers set up a roadblock outside Bethlehem yesterday. Following protests in the town, the IDF barred entry to Israeli citizens for several hours in the afternoon, when dozens of Palestinian youths held a march past Rachel's Tomb. The youths had broken off from a nearby demonstration of some 1,000 Bethlehem residents against the settlements and construction plans for Har Homa.

Peleg: UN is not a substitute for talks

By MARILYN HENRY

NEW YORK - Israel accused the Palestinians of "dysfunctional behavior" yesterday as the UN General Assembly opened a debate that is expected to condemn the Har Homa project.

Israeli charge d'affaires David Peleg told the General Assembly that the UN is not the place to discuss "contentious" issues between Israel and the Palestinians.

"Israel, too, has grievances concerning Palestinian violations of our agreements," Peleg said in a speech to the assembly. "But we prefer not to misuse this body to air our concerns."

Speaking with reporters after his speech, Peleg repeated that disagreements should be resolved in direct talks between the two sides.

"Unfortunately, the Palestinians have fallen into dysfunctional behavior patterns" by running to third parties, Peleg said.

If a resolution against Har Homa is passed, he said, "the result would be to encourage more extreme attitudes."

More than 30 speakers were scheduled to address the assembly yesterday. Israel was expected to face wide condemnation when the 185-member assembly votes on the Israeli plan to build 6,500 housing units in Jerusalem. That vote was expected today.

Last Friday, the US vetoed a resolution in which the Security Council would have opposed the Har Homa project. Arab states then sought the assembly session, although an assembly resolution would not be binding.

The PLO observer to the UN, Nasser al-Kidwa, called the Har Homa project a "colonial settlement" in "occupied Palestinian territory." He then went on to list what he called a series of Israeli violations of the status of Jerusalem, including the opening of the second entrance to the Western Wall Tunnel.

"There can be no peace in the Middle East without the restoration of our legal rights in Jerusalem," al-Kidwa said.

Settlers, Mordechai meet over pullback

By MARGOT DUDKEWITZ

Settler leaders met with Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai yesterday to give him a long list of proposals and "cosmetic changes" before the final maps of the Phase I withdrawal receive authorization.

The settlers also impressed upon Mordechai the necessity to involve them in discussions regarding future pullbacks, charging that as representatives of the areas where withdrawal will take place, "no one understands the needs of the communities better than" they.

Attending the meeting at the Laromme Hotel were Pinhas Wallerstein, chairman of the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, council director Aharon Domb and a majority of the mayors of all the regional and local councils that make up the communities. Accompanying Mordechai were Defense Ministry officials and top IDF officers, including OC Central Command Uzi Dayan.

The settlers' council raised 46 proposals and Mordechai agreed on 40, promising to examine the remaining six. According to council spokeswoman Yehudit Tayar, Mordechai was very receptive and endeavored to understand the difficulties facing the settlers in future withdrawals.

Although Tayar refused to divulge details of the proposals, she said the council's recommendations would not affect the amount of land transferred to the Palestinian Authority, but would improve the security problems faced by some settlements.

Two settlements facing isolation under the current pullback, said Tayar, are Karmeit Tzur and Yitzhar. Mordechai, she said, "basically agreed" to demands raised on behalf of Karmeit Tzur residents regarding the building of a 7 kilometer bypass road that would link up to Gush Etzion junction, thus keeping the settlers from having to travel through neighboring Beit Umar and Al-Arab. Yitzhar, near Nablus, she said, is also extremely isolated.

Mordechai told reporters after the meeting that he understood the settlers' distress and according to the government's decision he was free to make amendments on the map. Mordechai added that the IDF and security forces were ready to redeploy despite the Palestinians recent demands and the summit planned for Saturday. "We want to carry out the government's decision, and there is every chance that the Palestinian Authority will cooperate, even though they aren't satisfied with the size of the withdrawal."

IDF opens Netzarim road

By MARGOT DUDKEWITZ

Residents of the Netzarim settlement had difficulty comprehending an IDF decision to open the road running next to their settlement to all Palestinians yesterday.

The road that runs 20 meters from the settlement and continues towards the sea has been the source of clashes in the past when residents protested, fearing for their safety.

In 1994, prime minister Yitzhak Rabin ordered its closure after a bomb at Netzarim Junction killed 3 soldiers. Last December, the road was opened only to Palestinian Police and VIPs.

"I can't understand why the decision was made when things are so tense," said resident Shimon Ziv, adding that the residents hadn't been informed of the decision and many had gone to work without even realizing the change. "I am sure this evening when people return home the issue will be discussed."

Head of the Gaza Regional Council Aharon Tzur said he had not been informed of the change either.

NEWSLINE

with Dr. Menachem Klein, an expert on Palestinian affairs in the department of Political Science, Bar-Ilan University, and research fellow at the Jerusalem Institute.

Is there a real crisis, as opposed to a manufactured one, in relations between Israel and the Palestinians and if so to what extent?

There is a crisis of regional and international proportions in relations between Israel and America, as well as with Europe, Egypt and Jordan, and not just between Israel and the Palestinians. Its roots were in the government's decision over Har Homa and then the decisions taken over the first phase of redeployment in which the Palestinians had expected to receive more territory that would be under their sole control. The Palestinians virtually begged to be consulted on these issues, but the government refused. Since then the Palestinians have built up the crisis, but it is nonetheless real and serious.

What is the significance of the international conference on the Oslo accords, being organized by PA Chairman Yasser Arafat, which is due to be held in Gaza on Saturday?

For the first time, an international forum, which may have the potential for becoming a permanent forum, will be discussing the peace process and bilateral talks between Israel and its peace partners - without Israel actually taking part. The immediate meaning is that Israel is politically isolated. Although the significance of America's participation is being played down, it is meaningful because it is an indication of US displeasure with the government's policies. Furthermore, the forum could be used in future as a lobby to put pressure on Israel, while Arafat will no doubt use the conference as a stepping stone towards achieving international recognition for his ultimate aim of turning the Palestinian Authority into a Palestinian state.

Is there a way out of the present crisis through some kind of formula or compromise that would prove acceptable to both Israel and the Palestinians?

Firstly, the government has to freeze the decision to begin construction work on Har Homa. This has become the main issue and potential flashpoint. Secondly, a summit meeting between the leaders of Israel, Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, with the participation of the Americans, could be very useful in helping to renew the negotiations and direct dialogue, as well as being used as a step to re-building political confidence. If these two measures were to be adopted it could help take the wind out of the sails of the international conference in Gaza and deflate the growing feelings of anger and frustration among the Palestinian people themselves.

What is the likely outcome if these or other steps to reduce tension are not taken and the government adheres to its decisions?

If the government maintains its tough stance and there is no direct dialogue, there will undoubtedly be popular protests by the Palestinians against Israel. There have already been some minor confrontations on a local level as well as the bigger demonstrations. Arafat is trying to contain and control the situation and is keeping his police in their bases and not allowing them to participate in any of the protests as civilians. There is a genuine fear, however, that some of these demonstrations or protests could get out of hand and out of control and lead to violent clashes with bloody and tragic results. The crunch would no doubt come the minute the bulldozers move onto Har Homa.

Is there also concern, in such circumstances, of a renewal of Hamas and Islamic Jihad suicide and terror attacks?

There is a great deal of frustration and anger among the Palestinians, inflamed to some extent by the Palestinian media, over the situation at the moment. The attack on the soldier on guard duty at Teneh Omarim was an example of what appears to have been an initiative by individuals. If this mood continues to build up there is a danger of a renewal of terror attacks. Arafat, himself, may not give the go ahead for them, but Hamas could interpret the recent release of one of their radical leaders, as well as their participation in several political discussions with Arafat, as silent approval for such attacks.

With deep sorrow we announce the death of our beloved wife, mother, and grandmother **DOROTHY CANARD**

Deeply mourned and sadly missed by: Husband: Max Sons: Russel, Steven, David and Graeme Daughters-in-law: Cheryl and Joanne Grandchildren: Galit, Nadav, Aviv, Talia, and Nicole She will always be with us.

The funeral will take place today, Thursday, March 13, 1997, at 2 p.m. at Shikun Vatikim, Netanya.

Our deepest condolences to the Canard and Liebson Families on the death of **DOROTHY** your wife, mother, mother-in-law and grandmother, and our friend ESRA - English Speaking Residents Association

Members of Nayot mourn the passing of a veteran resident **ESTHER PASSMAN EPSTEIN** survivor of the 1948 Mt. Scopus Convoy and send sincere condolences to her son, David, and his wife, Deanna.

In deep sorrow we mourn the passing of our beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother **MILLIE GLEICHER** Gleicher and Knoll Families

Israeli Arab leaders to protest 'settlement policy'

By DAVID RUDGE

Israeli Arab leaders are to meet in Rahat in the Negev today to decide on measures to protest against what they describe as the government's settlement policies - especially the Har Homa building project.

The meeting will take place amid growing concern in the Israeli Arab community over the crisis in the peace talks with the Palestinians and Israel-Jordan relations.

"There is deep fear over the deterioration in the peace process and where this might lead, as well as anger at the government's policies which have brought this about," said Abed Inbitawi, spokesman for the monitoring committee of the Israeli Arab leadership.

"The monitoring committee will discuss the situation and how best the Arab public, as a peace force, can demonstrate in the Israeli sector for the aim of achieving a just peace which will respect the rights of Palestinians," said Inbitawi, who is also spokesman for Shfaram municipality.

The meeting is slated to discuss several proposals for measures to protest against the government's policies, including a mass rally in

Jerusalem, nationwide demonstrations and even calls for a general strike of the Arab sector.

There are also calls for activities to be coordinated with Jewish peace activists and political parties, including Peace Now and left-wing groups.

The heads of the 53 Arab councils, as well as Arab MKs and leading public figures, are expected to attend the monitoring committee meeting, which will also discuss plans to mark Land Day at the end of this month.

Inbitawi said the decision to hold the meeting in Rahat was in solidarity with the problems facing Beduin families in the region, relating to land, housing shortages, poor infrastructure, unrecognized villages and other difficulties.

Tarif takes ill after Zissman barb

By LIAT COLLINS

Knesset Interior Committee Chairman Salah Tarif (Labor) was taken ill during a stormy meeting about Har Homa yesterday and needed tranquilizers after another MK questioned his loyalty to the state.

Tarif was taken to the Knesset's clinic after a vehement exchange with Emanuel Zissman (Third Way), who accused him of betraying Labor party principles and favoring the Palestinians more than Israel. Zissman implied that Tarif's loyalty to the state was in doubt.

The argument erupted about 90 minutes into the meeting. The two MKs began screaming at each other. Zissman told Tarif, "You don't even represent the left-wing of the Labor Party. Move to Hadasah [the Arab and Communist party]. Move to the Democratic Arab Party. You've forgotten you are Druse. Where's your national pride? You

prefer to believe the Palestinians than to believe a minister."

Tarif, drained of color, shouted back that he was in favor of peace, and then asked Micha Goldman (Labor) to replace him, because he felt unwell. He was treated with tranquilizers. Zissman and Tarif later made up.

The exchange overshadowed the appearance of newly appointed Jerusalem Police Cmdr. Ya'ir Yitzhaki before the committee. Yitzhaki said the Palestinian Authority is currently trying to keep things calm, but when the bulldozers start work on Har Homa unrest and disturbances are likely.

The Ministry of the Interior Bid no. 1/97 Request for Proposals (RFP) A Policy Paper and a Survey Formulating Principles and Directives for Conservation of Open Spaces in Israel. Extension Announcement for RFP Purchase The last date for purchasing the RFP that was published on February 24, 1997, has been extended to March 20, 1997. The remaining details from the original advertisement have not changed.

Israel Petrochemical Enterprises Ltd. RE: Notice to Shareholders of the Annual General Meeting Notice is hereby given that the Annual Shareholders' Meeting of the Company shall take place in the Company's offices, at Beit Eliahu, 2 Ibn Givon Street, Tel Aviv, on Tuesday, April 8, 1997, at 9:00 a.m.

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مركز من التحصيل

Panel slams Matza over health crisis

By JUDY SIEGEL

The Knesset Labor and Social Affairs Committee yesterday called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to intervene personally and immediately in the Treasury's negotiations with the Health Ministry over severe overcrowding in the hospitals and the looming deficit in the health system.

The Israel Medical Association (IMA), which at 1 a.m. Wednesday announced a 24-hour warning strike would begin six hours later, criticized Health Minister Yehoshua Matza and his director-general Prof. Gabi Barabash for failing to appear at the meeting. Instead, said the IMA, they

sent only "second- and third-rank officials."

Matza explained later that he was busy in his office working specifically on the hospital crisis. He also said that the doctors' sanctions, in which they treated only emergency cases, were wrong even though their demands were justified. A ministry spokesman added: "The minister is leading the negotiations face to face with Treasury officials, with the support of the premier. Let him do this without pressure from strikes and threats."

The Knesset committee, chaired by Geshet MK Maxim Levy, voiced its support for the doctors' sanctions and called on Matza to "immediately take upon himself

responsibility for the struggle" for Treasury funds for the health system, "instead of disavowing responsibility for the collapse of the system."

Yisrael Ba'aliya MK Yuri Stern noted that the number of hospital beds per capita here is the lowest in the Western world. At the same time, average hospital stays are the shortest and residents pay high health taxes. Nurses Union head Iana Cohen said that "once a new health minister learns the ropes, he is replaced."

Labor MK Yossi Katz said the Patients' Rights Law is being violated daily in the hospitals due to inadequate care and lack of privacy due to overcrowding.

Dr. Yitzhak Bertowitz, head of hospital-

ization services in the ministry, said the committee meeting was "superfluous" because intensive negotiations with the Treasury over allocations for extra beds and staff are going on. Dr. Ya'acov Hart, head of the Association of Hospital Directors, warned that by the end of this year, there would be a NIS 2 billion deficit in the health system. "The whole system will collapse by this summer," he declared.

The committee members decided to visit a number of hospitals to see the situation for themselves. The IMA last week instructed its members to practice "safe and responsible medicine" and to discharge patients only when they're well enough, especially in internal-medicine departments.

Weizman: We must solve drug problem

By BATSHEVA TSUR

There are close to 250,000 drug abusers in the country and some 20,000 of them are addicted to hard drugs, the head of the War on Drugs Authority, Shlomo Gal, said yesterday.

"Israeli society is becoming so permissive that drug use is no longer scorned," Gal told a gathering of mayors who met with the president to discuss ways of fighting drug abuse.

President Ezer Weizman, who hosted the meeting at Beit Hanassi, told the mayors and local council heads that it is not enough to ask questions. "We have to come up with practical solutions," he said.

The president and his wife, Reuma, have met with many experts and former drug abusers and Reuma Weizman is to visit the US next month to raise funds to combat the scourge.

Some three and a half tons of heroin are smuggled into Israel every year and some 25 tons of hashish and marijuana, Gal said. "This is no longer the innocuous hashish of former years, because it has been 'enriched,'" he said.

In the streets of Or Yehuda, youths smoke hashish openly. "This is a national battle that we have to wage," the town's mayor, Shlomo Edri, said.

Shmuel Richman, head of the Negev local councils, said "hundreds of kilos" of drugs are smuggled in nightly across the border with Egypt.

In Tel Aviv, where NIS 12 million are devoted to combating drugs, there has been an improvement, but double that sum is needed, Mayor Ronni Milo told the gathering.

A solution was proposed by Prof. Avi Degani, who has researched the subject. "We have to market the campaign against drugs, just like the Americans did with smoking," he said. "They have succeeded in virtually stopping smoking. We have to turn drug usage into an anti-norm."



Breathe easy

Youngsters wearing gas masks participate in a civil defense exercise at Jerusalem's Steff School yesterday, part of nationwide exercises to test the schools' readiness. Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert and Education Minister Zevulun Hammer were on hand to observe the drill.

(Byam McBurney)

MKs begin debate on cloning

Committee disagrees on how to outlaw human clones

By JUDY SIEGEL

The Knesset Science & Technology Committee yesterday heard the deep moral and ethical concerns of doctors, scientists, ethicists and rabbis over the scientific breakthrough in Scotland that recently produced a cloned sheep.

Nearly all the committee's MKs agreed cloning humans should be forbidden, but they disagreed on how to go about it in a way that would include "outlaw" states and would not put too many limitations on academic freedom.

Hebrew University geneticist Prof. Adam Friedmann said he

thought it would be difficult or even impossible to clone humans in the foreseeable future, but Science Ministry director-general Zvi Yannai said the process used to produce the sheep would inevitably be improved and speeded up, making human cloning a definite possibility.

Tel Aviv University ethicist Prof. Assa Kasher minimized the fears that human cloning would de-personalize society or lead to armies cloned in a dictator's image. "This may shock you, but I don't see anything wrong with allowing parents to produce a clone of a child who died."

In any case, he said, even a genetic copy of a human being would have his own values, ideology and desires due to different environmental influences.

Labor MK Haggai Meron, who has proposed a bill to prohibit human cloning, said supervision of scientific experiments was needed, just as nuclear energy research and development are supervised.

Rabbi Yigal Shafran, head of the medical division in the Chief Rabbinate, said scientists must not be so arrogant that they think they are God. Legislation is needed to supervise their work in genetics,

but it should not tie their hands, as their research can also be used to cure diseases, he said.

The Knesset should wait until President Bill Clinton's National Bioethics Committee issues its recommendations on cloning before taking any stand, suggested Prof. Haim Aviv of the National Council for Research and Development. "We're not ripe for legislation in this field yet. It's too early," Aviv added that scientists were trained to be sensitive to the ethical and social implications of their work and were impelled by the desire to advance the fight against disease.

Court refuses to nullify bought evidence

By RAINE MARCUS

Tel Aviv District Court Judge Sara Sirota rejected a petition yesterday to nullify testimony bought from a private investigator in the media-wiretapping case.

Private investigator Ze'ev Laufer, who is charged with 18 counts of wiretapping in the affair, was paid \$600,000 by Ma'ariv publisher Ofer Nimrodi to give police evidence implicating Yediot Aharonot publisher Amon Mazon and the daily's security officer, Haim Rozenberg, for commissioning wiretapping. The money was paid from Ma'ariv and Nimrodi's Hachsharat Hayishuv capital.

Security company owner and Ma'ariv shareholder David Spector, who is a security advisor to Ha'aretz, petitioned the Tel Aviv District Court as to the legality of the deal with Laufer.

Sirota ruled that although she initially felt disgust at the agreement between Ma'ariv and Laufer, after

close inspection, she could not find anything illegal in it, especially since police had previously negotiated with Laufer to explore the possibility of his turning state's witness against Yediot.

The transaction was conducted with the state attorney's full authorization and was made to expose the truth, Sirota ruled.

Therefore, she continued, the question of "buying witnesses" by a private party was not applicable. Furthermore, the public interest was greater than Ma'ariv's interest to expose its rivals, she said. Although the agreement with Laufer may not be moral and is problematic, it does not constitute a precedent for "new norms in the country," Sirota said.

She also accused Spector of not having "clean hands" when he petitioned the court, since he is a friend of Rozenberg's and filed the petition just after the latter unsuccessfully appealed to the High Court of Justice against his impending indictment.

CABINET

Continued from Page 1

"The Middle East can be like the Benelux countries including Israel, Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon," Arafat told them.

Leshin said that relations were established with the Gaza Chamber of Commerce. "They wanted to open an office in Tel Aviv and we offered them room in the Israel Chamber of Commerce."

What bothers the merchants most is the continuing closure. Despite some easing of the restrictions, most businessmen still cannot travel out of Gaza. "Flowers meant for export are fed to the goats," Leshin heard.

PA negotiator Saeb Erekat said the crisis blew up because, in Sunday's meeting with Levy, the Israelis refused even to hear the Palestinian arguments in defense of their interpretation of the Oslo 2 agreements. "We urged them to

send an Israeli legal team to meet a Palestinian legal team to work out the provisions relating to permanent status and further redeployment. They refused."

Meanwhile the UN General Assembly, void of supporters of Israel, debated the crisis yesterday. (Story, Page 2)

Levy told the Knesset plenum yesterday the PA is allowing groups like Hamas, which until recently it considered to be dangerous opponents, to join PA meetings. Answering several motions to the agenda on the planned first redeployment, Levy said

there are signs the PA is beginning to foment unrest, which could be particularly damaging since Hamas is involved. He described the situation as "a dangerous development."

Levy said the government's decision to build on Har Homa is still valid and stressed that neither this nor the previous government had promised to refrain from building in Jerusalem. Levy also said the government is

determined to build housing for the Arab sector as well. He warned that violence or international pressure could stall the peace process. "We won't abandon our interests because of pressure," he said.

Levy strongly condemned Arafat's planned meeting in Gaza, saying it violates the promise Arafat made to Rabin to solve all problems directly and without international intervention.

Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Chairman Uzi Landau (Likud) attacked the prime minister, saying the continued negotiations with the Palestinians violate the government's basic guidelines, which demand reciprocity as a condition for discussions on the permanent arrangements.

Meretz leader Yossi Sarid promised that, should Netanyahu suspend the decision on the Har Homa project, Meretz would withdraw its no-confidence motion and give him parliamentary support on the issue.

NEWS

in brief

Syrian held secretly for three years

A former Syrian soldier accused of espionage has been held in an Israeli prison - secretly and without trial - for the last three years, Channel 1 reported yesterday.

"Security officials, who are willing to deport him, have been unable to find a country willing to grant him asylum," it said, adding that IDF soldiers arrested Ali Fahmi, a sergeant in the Syrian artillery corps, three years ago after he crossed into Israeli-held territory near Mount Hermon.

The General Security Service accused him of entering Israel with the intent of spying, it said, adding that he told investigators he decided to desert from the Syrian army after a "violent argument" with his commanding officer.

Israel Radio said Fahmi's imprisonment had been kept classified until the Supreme Court lifted the secrecy order yesterday.

Reuter

Seven-year-old raped in Petah Tikva

A seven-year-old girl, who had been left home alone, was raped in her Petah Tikva home yesterday afternoon. A man rang the doorbell and she allowed him inside, where he proceeded to steal jewelry and then raped the child. The incident was discovered several hours later when her parents returned home. *Jim*

Tamra man charged with rape

Gazi Hajazi, 39, of Tamra, was indicted yesterday in Haifa District Court for the rape and attempted rape of two immigrant women living in an absorption center near Haifa. According to the charge sheet, the suspect, on the pretext of offering each of the women employment in his office, took them for rides in his car and attacked them. He is charged with raping one of the women in January and attempting to rape the second woman last month. The second victim managed to fight him off and call the police. *Jim*

Youth coach remanded for indecent acts

The Jerusalem Magistrate's Court yesterday remanded for five days the coach of a local youth basketball team for allegedly committing indecent acts against his players. The coach, who denies all charges, was arrested yesterday after six youths complained to police last week. Judge Yehzekel Barkaly denied a police request for a 10-day remand. *Jim*

Two killed in truck-car collision

Driver A. Shahamiya, 48, and passenger Noam Hales, 47, both of Jatt, were killed yesterday, when a truck driven by a 25-year-old man from Zemer swerved out of its lane and struck their car head-on. The truck driver and three car passengers were admitted to Hillel Yoffe Hospital in Hadera with light to moderate injuries. *Jim*

Judge criticized in youths' child abuse case

Women's and children's organizations, as well as MKs, yesterday criticized Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court Judge Nira Lidiski's explanation for the light sentence she gave to two 14-year-olds who committed indecent acts against a five-year-old girl. The teens' offense was just a bit of fondling, Lidiski reportedly said at a WIZO event this week. When journalist Asheret Kutler, who was the discussion's moderator, then asked Lidiski what she would do to the teens if the girl had been her daughter, she responded, "I would shoot them." *Jim*

Bar-On Affair questioning continues

Lawyer Dov Weissglass, once considered a candidate for attorney-general, was summoned to give evidence by the police team investigating the Bar-On Affair. Weissglass was asked if he knew of any improprieties concerning the subsequent appointment of Roni Bar-On. While candidates for the position were being examined Weissglass met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and yesterday was reportedly asked by investigators of the nature of that meeting.

Today Shas MK Aryeh Deri is expected to be summoned for questioning by police to determine still if there is any truth to allegations that Deri promised the government Shas's support on the Hebron redeployment in return for Bar-On's appointment, as broadcast by Channel 1. Deri's advisor, Yehuda Avidan, may also be called to give evidence this morning to discover if he was privy to information concerning the alleged deal.

Raine Marcus

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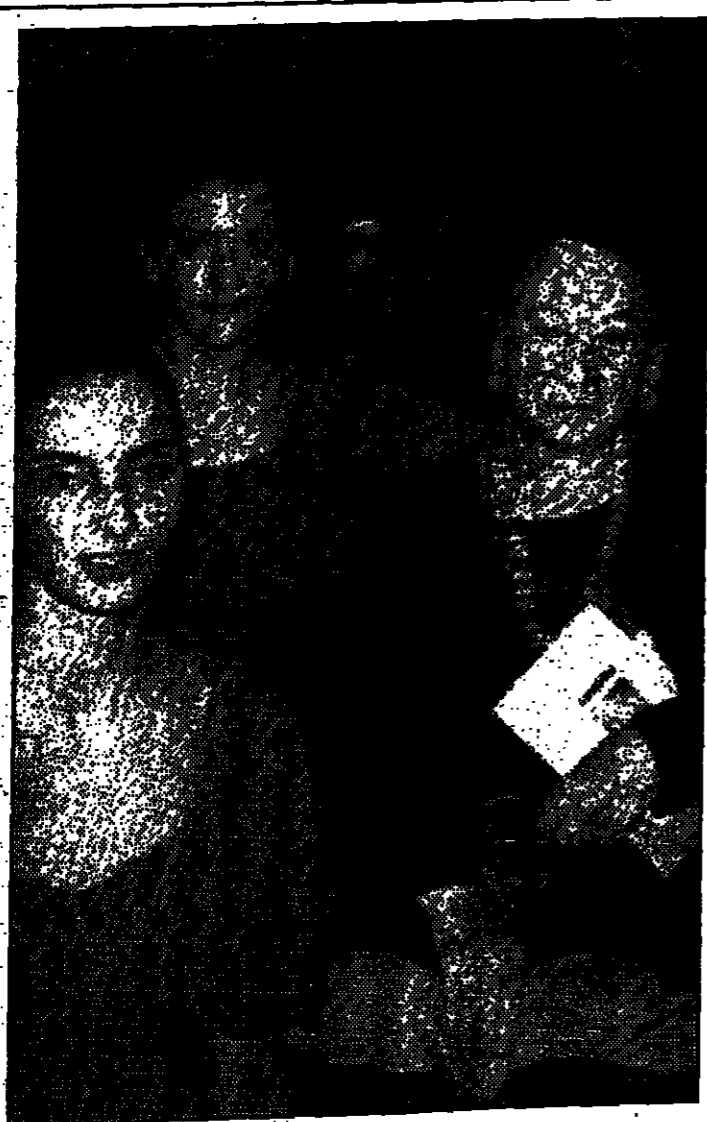
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In July 1099, after they had captured Jerusalem, the Crusaders realized they needed a port with a major harbor. So they turned this small city into an important Crusader stronghold. The markets filled with goods, cloth, jewels and precious stones, for the troops to take home as souvenirs. We'll visit the Hospitaller Quarter and view the new discoveries, the Genua Quarter - little Italy in the Holy Land - the Templars Quarter, the Turkish Baths and more.
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Tour guide: Danny Weiss

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A final dance

Former 'Jerusalem Post' dance critic Dora Sowden with dancers from the modern ballet workshop of the Rubin Academy High School following the presentation of a JNF certificate for 18 trees planted in her honor. The Jerusalem Municipality and the 'Post' yesterday honored the internationally recognized critic for her unique contribution to local dance life. Sowden recently retired after more than 50 years of writing about dance, 30 of them for the 'Post.'

(Photo: Helen Kaye, Photo: Brian Hendler)

No injuries in Japan N-plant fire

By BRAVEN SHILLIE

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese watching the evening news yesterday saw dramatic film footage of an accident at a nuclear plant that made it seem like a scene right out of *Star Trek*.

The fires at the nuclear processing plant in northeastern Japan exposed 35 workers to minimal amounts of radiation, a plant spokesman said yesterday.

No one was injured in the fires, which broke out in the same area 10 hours apart, and officials said radioactivity levels remained well within safe limits around the plant.

Dressed in what looked like bloated space suits and helmets, and breathing loudly through respirators, investigators walked past laboratory equipment wrenched

apart by an explosion and two fires.

Dozens of alarm bells were still ringing and banks of red lights were flashing as the men tentatively poked through scraps of twisted metal in a building that houses nuclear waste handling facilities.

"Let's keep out of there," said one as they looked into a second-floor room in which drums full of radioactive material mixed protectively with asphalt are stored. They peered inside to see the floor and ceiling coverings torn apart, and equipment strewn around.

On the first floor, near the asphalt-handling room where the fires broke out, water was splattering down from near the ceiling. The room in which the fire broke out was not shown on the video.

The accident — which exposed more workers to radioactivity than

any other in the history of Japan — immediately increased the criticism faced by the nation's nuclear power system.

The blazes and explosion occurred on the first floor of a four-story building in Tokaimura, a million-square-meter complex with a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant and laboratories, 115 km northeast of Tokyo. The compound contains no nuclear reactor.

Damage from the blast was clear in the video. It was edited in several places, and there was no definite indication of where the blast was centered.

Japan already was trying to rebuild trust in its nuclear program, set back by an accident in December 1995 in a prototype fast-breeder reactor, which produces additional plutonium for fuel while generating electricity.



An Albanian rebel peers into a car carrying reporters at a roadblock in Delvine yesterday. Delvine is under rebel control. (Reuters)

Albanian PM wants talks with rebels

TIRANA (Reuters) — Albania's new prime minister, Bashkim Fino, facing a growing wave of unrest, said yesterday he wanted talks with armed rebels holding towns throughout southern Albania.

As rebellion moved closer to the capital, Fino met political parties to discuss forming an interim government to oversee new elections.

His comments followed appeals from Italy and Greece to meet the rebels and an announcement that a European mediation mission led by former Austrian leader Franz Vranitzky was to return to Tirana today.

"I think this is not a time to issue orders on either side. It is a time for talks and dialogue," Fino told state television.

"Not only my personal (links) but those of my government should be based on good understanding and cooperation with them so that they listen to our options and we listen to theirs." In some parts of the south the rebellion appeared to have deteriorated into lawlessness, with armed gangs roaming at will through rebel-held towns.

Pilot reopens TWA missile theory

NEW YORK (AP) — A military helicopter pilot who witnessed the explosion of TWA Flight 800 repeatedly told investigators he thought a missile struck the plane, according to a source.

The Air National Guard pilot has not been allowed to speak publicly because of an FBI ban on federal employees speaking about the investigation. The pilot, Capt. Chris Baur, is a civilian pilot for US Customs.

Baur's eyewitness report comes to light as critics of the investigation claim to have evidence suggesting that Flight 800 was shot down by an errant US Navy missile. A Pentagon spokesman said investigators had thoroughly probed the issue, even inventorying the Navy's missile arsenal.

"Personnel have been interviewed, records have been checked. There is absolutely no evidence to support

this theory," said Kenneth Bacon. "There was not evidence two months ago, there is not evidence now."

A number of eyewitness accounts said people saw something in the sky the night of the crash. Baur's clear view from the helicopter and his military training would make his account one of the most credible.

Mechanical failure or a bomb also haven't been ruled out as possible causes of the crash.

Russia's reformers return, anger opponents

MOSCOW (Reuters) — Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin said yesterday he was forming a new government of liberal reformers in a reshuffle the Communist opposition branded "ruinous" for Russia and vowed to fight.

President Boris Yeltsin, firmly back at the helm after many months of illness, has given the premier one week to reorganize his cabinet. Only Chernomyrdin and new First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais are assured of keeping their jobs.

"Professional market economists, firm supporters of the president's course of reforms, will come into the government," Itar-Tass news agency quoted Chernomyrdin as saying.

The prospect of more free market moves under Chubais, once Russia's privatization supremo, was enough to drive Moscow's communist-dominated parliament to vote for a furious, though non-binding, motion condemning the reshuffle.

As yet, however, Chernomyrdin has named no names but said new ministers will be under 50 with administrative experience.

"Now there are all possibilities of forming a united and effective team of serious and responsible professionals," Chernomyrdin said, adding personnel changes could be announced sooner than the seven-day deadline set by Yeltsin.

The State Duma lower house of parliament, dominated by

Yeltsin's communist and nationalist opponents, approved by 230 votes to 122 a toughly worded resolution condemning the moves.

"The changes carried out in the government again illustrate the desire of the current authorities to continue the ruinous social-economic course which has brought Russia to the brink of catastrophe," said the resolution. It carries no legal force.

"They are an eloquent testimony to the readiness of the leadership to subject Russia and her vital interests to the diktat of the International Monetary Fund and foreign capital," said the resolution, drafted by the Communist faction.

Opposition deputies have been particularly enraged by Yeltsin's decision to draft Chubais, a 41-year-old liberal, back into the government to oversee economic reforms. The resolution called his appointment a "direct challenge to social opinion."

The Duma has limited powers under a 1993 constitution, drawn up after Yeltsin subdued its Soviet-era predecessor with tanks.

Since Chernomyrdin stays put in the reshuffle, the Duma will have no right of review over the new cabinet appointments.

But more seriously, the communists have threatened a general no-confidence motion which, if voted through twice, would force Yeltsin to either dismiss the government or dissolve the Duma.

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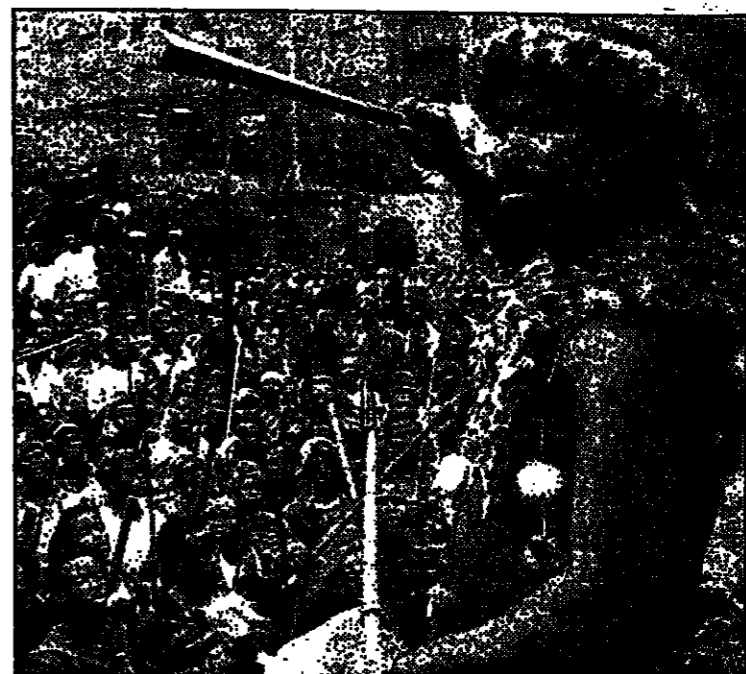
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Zulu demonstrators gather yesterday in Johannesburg. (Reuters)

Three killed as Zulus march

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) — Three people were killed and at least four wounded yesterday as Zulu nationalists marched to commemorate the slaying of more than 50 people in a 1994 protest ahead of South Africa's first all-race election.

Police said the first two killings occurred in Soweto black township before the rally, while the third was reported soon after the protesters had arrived in Johannesburg's city center.

Reports that violent clashes had erupted between police and

demonstrators afterwards were denied by police on the scene.

"We confirm three deaths. Two people were killed in Soweto township and one at the station in town," said police Sergeant Mark Reynolds.

The march was held to commemorate the deaths of at least 55 people as well as the hundreds injured in and around Johannesburg during the 1994 demonstration when supporters of the mainly Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party marched in support of Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini.

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Sharing the burden

King Hussein's pained and painful letter to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu must be taken seriously. There can be no questioning the king's sincere desire for the success of the peace process, and even his desire to deepen the warm peace with Israel. The king himself, however, also bears responsibility not to return to the rejectionist stance he held during the Gulf war, and not to ape Egypt's spoiler role.

Hussein makes numerous charges, large and small, concerning "accumulating tragic actions" that are "fast sliding [Arabs and Israelis] towards an abyss of bloodshed and disaster." The king continues, "Your course of actions seem bent on destroying all I believe in or have striven to achieve with the Hashemite family since Faisal the First and Abdullah to the present times." Harsh words. In a letter of response, Netanyahu not only denies that he is destroying the peace process, but claims that it is he who has saved it from oblivion. "I inherited a process that was failing," writes the prime minister. "The country was suffering its worst terrorist wave in its history, with bus bombs going off in the heart of Israeli cities and a devastating mini-war taking a heavy toll in Lebanon. By election time, the peace process was in its death throes."

Netanyahu's letter continues, "Rather than let the Oslo process die after the elections, I sought to revive it. I have taken decisions that even my predecessors were extremely reluctant to attempt."

It is certainly ironic to hear Netanyahu proudly claim credit for saving an agreement that he continues to attack. Even if one discounts the claim of saving Oslo from non-believers such as Shimon Peres, it is true that Oslo under Netanyahu has received a substantial shot in the arm. Under Netanyahu, the withdrawal from most of Hebron, and indirectly, the Oslo Accord itself received an unprecedented 87-vote majority in the Knesset.

Before Hebron, the charge that Netanyahu was destroying the peace process, though unfair, was in the realm of credibility — he had not shown whether he would abide by Oslo or seek to extract Israel from the agreement. Now that Netanyahu has gone to considerable lengths to fulfill Oslo, he is being accused, in effect, of not doing so with enough enthusiasm and generosity.

In this context, it is hardly fair for Hussein to saddle Netanyahu with the charge of potentially "bury[ing] the peace process for all times." Is there no room to credit Netanyahu with sharing the king's fundamental desire for, as Hussein poetically describes it, "the final reconciliation of all the descendants of the children of Abraham?" The king's letter refrains not only from giving Netanyahu any credit, but from

placing any burden of restraint and responsibility on the Palestinians.

With respect to Israel's decision to build a Jewish neighborhood on Har Homa in Jerusalem, Hussein accuses Netanyahu of "maneuver[ing] our Palestinian brethren into inevitable violent resistance." In fact, violence is only inevitable if key leaders such as King Hussein do not reject violence as a legitimate component of the peace process. If the king sees the threat of Palestinian violence as such a dire threat to the peace process, why does he not call for Palestinian restraint? As a leader who has taken his share of courageous risks for peace, Hussein has the right to request that Netanyahu resist pressures against him that are contrary to a broader view of Israel's interests. By the same token, Hussein should not simply adopt every Palestinian demand as his own, and refuse to stand up to Palestinian threats of violence that, by his own lights, severely threaten the peace process.

It would be very worrisome if Hussein's letter to Netanyahu reflected a return to the period of the Gulf war, when he took the side of Iraq against the US-led coalition that saved Kuwait. At that time, we were expected to understand the domestic pressures he was under, yet Hussein dismisses the pressures on Netanyahu to build in Jerusalem. It is one thing to ask Netanyahu not to build new settlements in remote corners of Judea and Samaria; quite another to suggest that Israel act as sovereign in its own capital.

When asked Tuesday about his letter to Netanyahu, while Israeli papers were full of incorrect and scathing leaks from the supposed text, Hussein pointed his finger at the camera and asked the public to remember that he feels a "duty to the Israeli public as well." This is a truly admirable sentiment, and one that no other current Arab leader would express.

It is also encouraging that Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai was greeted warmly this week in Jordan, and that relations between the two militaries seem unaffected by the current ebb in relations at the top. At the end of the day, however, it is not possible for Jordan to maintain a close relationship with Israel and Israelis while unfairly demonizing Israel's prime minister.

It is appropriate for Netanyahu to work harder in treating Hussein as a partner and a friend in the peace process. There are gestures Netanyahu could have made recently to Hussein, such as allowing him to fly Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat from Amman to Gaza. But the king cannot expect all his advice to be taken, and should not place the peace process's entire burden of compromising, taking risks, and resisting public pressure on Israel's doorstep.



Smile for the cameras!

URI DAN
DENNIS EISENBERG

Binyamin Netanyahu is a victim of the travel bug. He likes nothing better than to lay aside coalition woes and the Bar-On scandal, and forget sinking popularity polls and his mother's criticism by taking off for Washington, Amman, and Moscow.

No sooner was he back from the US than he accepted a surprise invitation from Cairo to a party on the Nile. There, as in other capitals, he smiled happily at his host, President Mubarak.

Why was the prime minister in such a hurry to grab his toothbrush and rush off to Egypt last week? Did he or his aides have even fleeting second thoughts about accepting Mubarak's hospitality? For months our government has been assailing Mubarak for his vicious verbal bombardment of Netanyahu and Israel. And with good reason.

Egypt obstructed the Hebron withdrawal negotiations, egging Yasser Arafat on to take a more and more extremist line — so much so that Washington was finally forced to tell Mubarak: "Cool it, or else."

To complaints by the House Committee about strident anti-Semitism in the Egyptian media, Mubarak's foreign minister replied disingenuously in the US: "All Arabs are Semites. How can we be antisemites?"

At the same time, a skillful public relations exercise was under way back in Cairo, with the kind cooperation of Binyamin Netanyahu.

Clearly, the front-page press photos and TV focus on the Egyptian and Israeli leaders shaking hands and looking frankly into each other's eyes was aimed at deflecting any criticism that might be aimed at Egypt during Mubarak's US visit.

How could Netanyahu walk into this trap? Didn't he see that an exaggerated display of friendship with Mubarak would discourage the Anti-Defamation League in New York and others, Jews and non-Jews, in their protest against the vicious Egyptian antisemitic onslaught? Little wonder a New York columnist recently described Israelis as "the dumbest Jews in the world."

An Israeli Foreign Ministry official shook his head in disbelief over Netanyahu's haste in going off to Cairo. He asked a writer of this column: "What was the purpose of the trip — other than to help Mubarak ward off justifiable criticism in the US?"

"Isn't it clear that Egypt has been playing the same game for 19 years? It's all politeness and smiles in Cairo — then the moment your back is turned, they damn you with their curses."

Truly none are so blind as those who will not see.

HOURS before Netanyahu's arrival, *Al-Wafd* ran a cartoon of

Netanyahu with his name misspelled to read "he stinks" in Arabic. And an *Al-Akhar* cartoon showed a car with Netanyahu's name on the number plate facing a large traffic sign declaring: "Entry forbidden to Cairo."

To add insult to injury, during the two hours the two leaders sat together with only their translators present, Mubarak behaved like an arrogant interrogator, cross-examining Netanyahu by means of a prepared questionnaire he held in his hand.

Netanyahu acquitted himself well, we were told, spinning his vision of peace in the Middle East. "Our president looks bewildered by Netanyahu's oratory," commented an English-speaking Egyptian journalist at the press conference that followed. "So are Israelis," quipped a nearby voice, in Hebrew.

Hosni Mubarak doesn't need a public relations firm to polish his image. He's got Israel's premier

More disturbing was the next remark from the Egyptian: "We already knew all about you being forced to pull out of 10 percent of the West Bank. The Americans told us."

Suddenly it was all crystal-clear. The whole first-stage West Bank withdrawal was American-crafted and choreographed. And Netanyahu's visit to Cairo was also planned by the US, to ensure that the State Department could then roll out the red carpet for Mubarak.

Criticism of Mubarak's reception would thus be muted, by pictures of all that "coziness" with the Israeli leader in the shadow of

the pyramids. The press conference in Egypt revealed the true depth of Egyptian antagonism to Israel. Asked an Egyptian woman journalist: "Are you about to bomb somebody in the region, like Begin did when he illegally attacked the Iraqi nuclear plant?" And another voice: "Why do you treat Palestinians like the Americans treat blacks in their south?" Further hostile questions to Netanyahu followed.

Finally, an angry Shimon Shiffer from *Yedioth Aharonot* got up and asked: "Why all these hostile questions to our prime minister? Why the ceaseless attacks against Israel in the Egyptian press?"

Laconically, Mubarak responded: "We have a free press here. And what about *The Jerusalem Post*, which is attacking both me and Egypt all the time?"

Mubarak's comment was broadcast by international TV as a statement of fact. No one pointed out the obvious: that there is no such thing as a free press in Egypt. Nothing can appear without government approval or dictat.

The last salvo was fired at the luxurious Dahara Palace. To end the day, Netanyahu had the dubious pleasure of being introduced to a group of Egyptian so-called intellectuals.

The questions aimed at him came from the gutter. Why do you have a racist, Hitler-like policy toward the Palestinians and Arabs in the Middle East? Why do you treat Arabs like blacks are treated in the US's southern states?

And from a retired general: "I can see, Mr. Netanyahu, that you have learned nothing from all the wars I fought against Israel." Netanyahu responded sharply, great as usual in debate.

Perhaps the Egyptians should have told the departing Israeli leader to "have a nice day." After all, Netanyahu had given Mubarak a priceless PR gift, which the Egyptian would use well in the US.

The writers are authors of *The Mossad: Secrets of the Israeli Secret Service and other books on the Middle East*.

POSTSCRIPTS

ONE OF THE world's tiniest countries may become even tinier. Nevis — a Caribbean island known for beaches favored by young British royals — wants to secede from a federation with the slightly larger island of St. Kitts.

St. Kitts-Nevis is already listed as the world's least populous country, with only 41,800 residents. Nevis alone has just 9,000.

Ever since the country became independent from Britain in 1983, Nevisians have gumbled about alleged domination by St. Kittians.

Premier Vance Amory

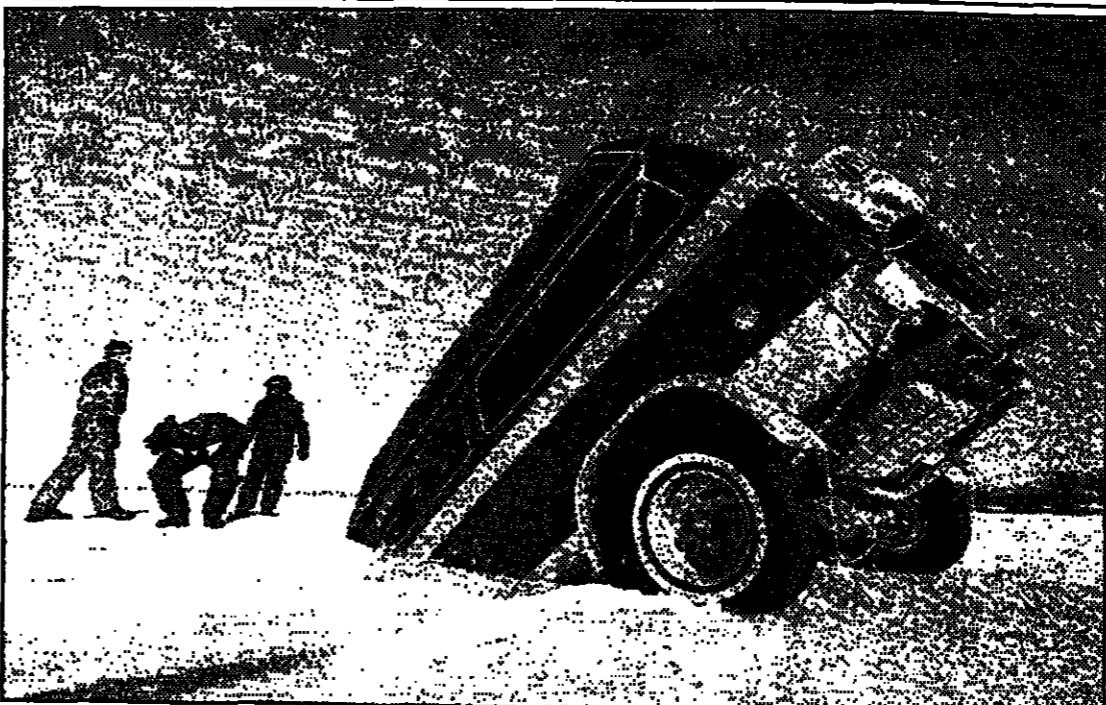
announced the secession bid, and Federal Prime Minister Denzil Douglas said he didn't object.

"If secession is the choice of Nevis, then so be it, and my government will not stand in the way," Douglas said.

But the islands' neighbors aren't pleased.

"The fragmentation of the Caribbean people, already marginalized in the international community, weakens every Caribbean country and the entire region," said Prime Minister Lester Bird of neighboring Antigua and Barbuda.

PICTURE POSTSCRIPT



"Don't worry, guys; the ice is plenty thick." Well, it wasn't, and this minivan crashed through, forcing six Canadian ice-fishermen to scramble out the back door. (AP)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POLISH RESTITUTION

Sir, — Readers of J. Bushinsky's article "Insult and injury" (March 5) on restitution of Jewish communal property in Poland may get the impression that Poland does not intend to proceed with restitution in an open and honest way, which is a serious misunderstanding. Had the author double-checked information on the subject he would have probably restrained himself from rather irresponsible comments which are both unjust and miss the point.

It is not true that "the legislation would compensate only a minuscule remnant of Polish Jewry... in only nine Polish cities." Firstly, it is not a law dealing with compensation but with restitution of property of religious communities only. Secondly, the law enables proper organizations and institutions to set up a foundation which will be legally authorized to take care of the property. Both WJRO and the World Federation of Polish Jews may become partners in the foundation provided it is deemed appropriate.

It is also untrue that the legislation takes into account only nine cities in Poland where contemporary Jewish religious communities have been established. Activities of the foundation will cover the whole territory of Poland, with the hope that it will support active people willing to contribute to the communities of Bialystok, Lublin etc., which the author mentions as "no man's land," in regards to the process of restitution.

However, implementation of the law depends on both sides. On understanding the essence of friendly Polish-Jewish relations, of using the language of cooperation and dialogue which has been the aim of the Polish legislators but regrettably not of the author of the article.

ZBIGNIEW SZUMIELEWICZ
Press Counselor
Embassy of Poland in Israel
Tel Aviv.

POTENCY OF SYMBOLS

Sir, — One should never underestimate the potency of symbols. Yasser Arafat understands this perfectly. Whenever he appears in public, his keffiyeh is carefully draped into a shape representing the whole of western Palestine. The significance of this may be lost on some, but it is fully comprehended by his followers.

A related symbol is the charter of the PLO, most of which is devoted to the desire to eliminate Israel. The fact remains that this symbol, central to the raison d'être of the PLO, still exists intact. Any successor to Arafat could claim, with justification, that its aim has still to be accomplished.

Until we have the "reciprocity" of the cleansing in the charter of all references to the destruction of Israel, further negotiations with the Palestinians should be postponed.

OSCAR DAVIES
Jerusalem.

EASY CONVERSIONS

Sir, — The inference in the editorial "Strength in numbers" (February 28) that easier conversion, particularly for immigrants from the former Soviet Union and the Ethiopian Falash Mura, would significantly affect the Jewish people's demographic decline relative to the burgeoning general world population is a numerical fantasy. There are people who would convert if the process was standardized and easier, but their numbers would not begin to approach the billions of Christians, Moslems, Hindus and Buddhists.

The enormous Jewish impact on history and culture has resulted not from quantitative factors, but from qualitative factors. For example, Judaism's central role in the emergence of Christianity and Islam and the relationship of a tiny Jewish minority to these two massive surrounding societies.

ROBERT KIRK
Upper Nazareth.

LEBANON

Sir, — How many casualties in the security zone will it take before we learn what France and the United States so painfully learned? The battle against a guerrilla or terrorist force which has the support of the local population is a hopeless effort.

But Lebanon need not become for us Lebanon, as in Vietnam. The local populace can be made to learn that it is more painful for them to harbor and assist the enemy than it is to resist their presence. That can be accomplished without our soldiers being on the ground there if each enemy excursion across our border is met with a massive destruction by artillery of the area from which they attack plus damage to the utilities serving the public, such as power stations and water supply.

Soon enough the message will get through to the civilians and to the government that it is in their interest to stop the terror.

GERALD SCHROEDER
Jerusalem.

INEPT AND NAIVE

Sir, — Whatever the outcome of the Bar-On affair, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has shown himself not to be the one to lead the country.

Even if we assume that he is innocent of any deliberate wrongdoing in the issue, we are left with one or both of the following conclusions:

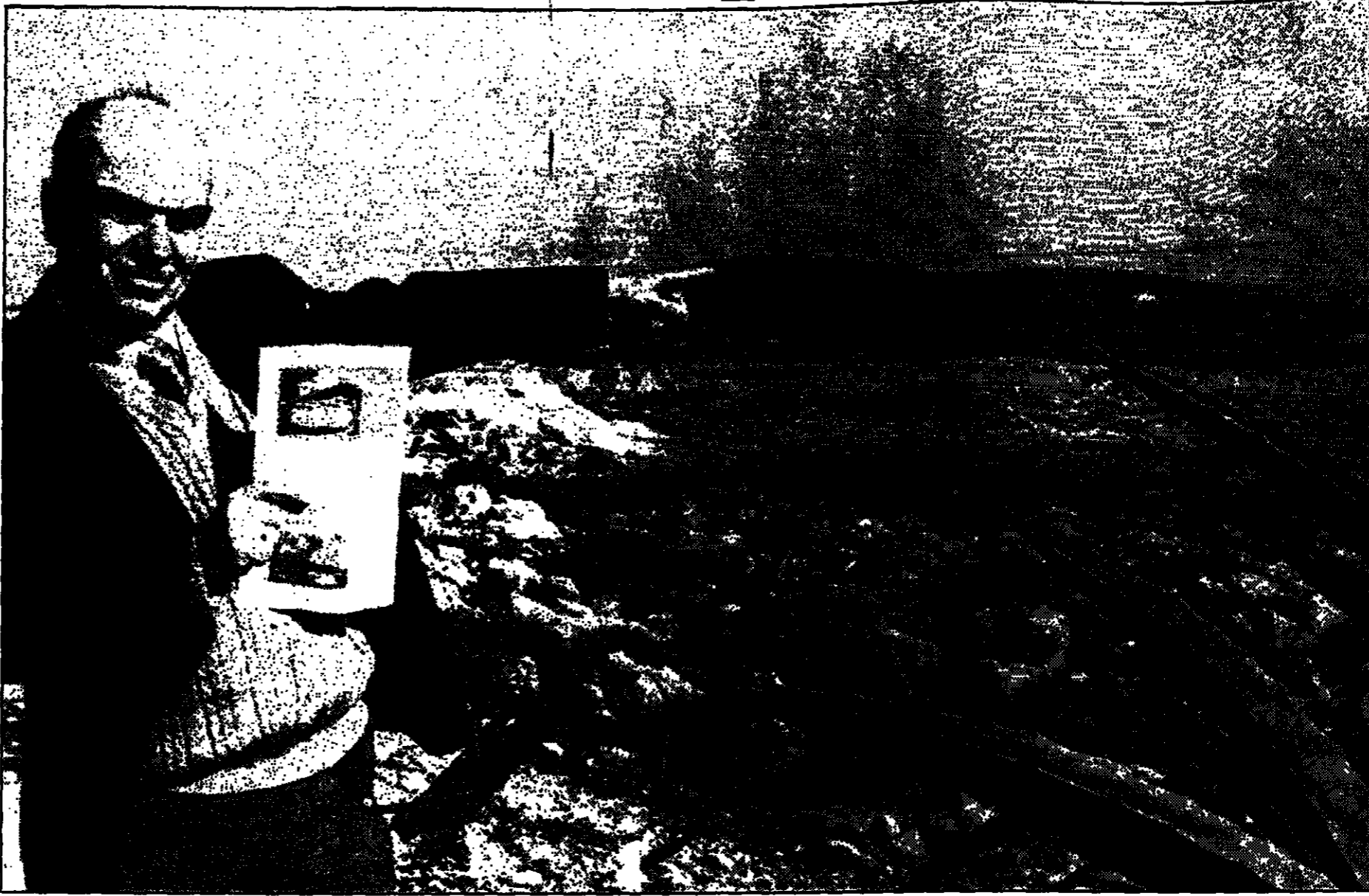
He is extremely superficial, slipshod and dilettante. Witness his haste to rush Bar-On's appointment through his government, whereas the vital appointment of our UN ambassador is still pending.

He is totally inept and shockingly naive to have been forced by others to push for the Bar-On appointment under the circumstances.

L.M. SHORR
Jerusalem.

مركز الأهل

Rival claims to a disputed hilltop



David Myr points to the plot of land at Har Homa, where he planned to build a 6,500-unit apartment complex and golf course.

(Bryon McBarney)

DEAR RUTHIE

Purim can't mask marital problems

By RUTHIE BLUM

Dear Ruthie, Every year, as Purim draws near, my wife and I end up quarreling over the costume issue. Since I was a child, I have always detested putting on costumes of any kind. My wife, on the other hand, has always loved dressing up. She's also very talented at creating original costumes, and sewing them. (Our kids always win prizes for theirs.)

Every year, one or the other of our gang has a wild Purim party.

Every year, my wife will not accept that I want to go to these parties without a costume.

Every year, I end up giving in so as not to spoil her "fun."

This year I am not going to allow her to dictate to me how I will be dressed.

How can I do this without creating a major marital rift?

Dressed Down
Somewhere in Israel
Dear Costume Cringing,
If refusal on your part to wear a Purim costume can cause a "major rift" in your marriage, then it's got some heavy cracks in it already.

Your description of the annual feud over the party dress code indicates that the costume question is symbolic of other issues the two of you are not resolving. It would be beneficial to examine what these other issues might be.

For example, your wife may feel that you are unappreciative of one of her more outstanding talents - talents for which strangers award her prizes.

Perhaps forcing you into donning one of her creations is an expression of frustration or feelings of inadequacy.

You, then, may be responding to her emotional urgency by "giving in" every year on the costume issue.

Perhaps you would do better to respond, instead, by paying genuine heed to her deep-seated needs.

For her part, your wife should examine her own lack of heed to the needs of a husband who detests dressing up.

Rather than forcing you to ignore your ill ease at Purim, your wife would do better to help you resolve whatever it is which has caused it since you were a child.

Since Purim seems to bring so much marital baggage to the surface, you could use the upcoming weeks to discuss the issue, rather than fight over it.

Then, putting your foot down about dressing up will become unnecessary, either because your wife will have come to understand your distress or because you will have come to understand hers.

Ideally, it will be a combination of the two.

Letters should be addressed to: "Dear Ruthie," POB 81, 91000 Jerusalem. For E-mail: editors@jpost.co.il

The uproar over Har Homa could have been avoided if the government hadn't expropriated private lands for the project, says David Myr, the only Jew still fighting against the land expropriation.

Out of the 1,850 dunams (460 acres) expropriated by the government for Har Homa, 1,400 belonged to Jews - all of whom, except for Myr, have accepted the terms of the expropriation. Myr owned the largest parcel of land expropriated for the project. For the last six years, Myr, heading a public real estate company called Makor, has been fighting the expropriation of his land through the court system all the way up to the Supreme Court.

Makor, with Myr at the helm, purchased 568 dunams of land in 1970; he also acquired the option to buy 383 dunams of land from Himanuta, a subsidiary of the Jewish National Fund (Myr never exercised this option but still claims that it is valid, even though the JNF property may be used by the government). For the last 25 years, Myr has been planning the new neighborhood on his parcel of almost 1,000 dunams of land: there are extensive architectural plans, from basic blueprints to floor models, and even an animated computer design of the entire project.

"The Peace Project," as Myr calls it, is an entire town that includes 6,500 apartments, hotels, parks, schools, an industrial section for high-tech factories, a country club and a golf course. If it were not for the government intervention, all this would have been built by Myr, backed by private investors who also had business arrangements with companies such as Africa Israel and Migdal Insurance.

On April 21, 1991, the government expropriated 1850 dunams of land - including Myr's piece and 450 dunams of Arab land - for its version of a Har Homa neighborhood. Their Har Homa, which will also include 6,500 housing units, has set off an international debate and threatens to send the peace process into disarray.

"Har Homa didn't have to be a political problem," says Myr. "It's a private matter: In Har Homa there are Arabs and Jews. There wouldn't be a problem if all the private owners could build for themselves. They can build on their land and I will build on mine."

Hanna Atrach, the mayor of Beit Sahur, the Arab town bordering Har Homa, agrees. Atrach is one of the 65 Arabs whose property was also expropriated by the government for the Har Homa project (Atrach's 110 dunams had been in his family since 1860).

Obviously Atrach prefers that the land returns to its original Arab and Jewish owners. But, he adds, "If Myr wants, he can develop it, but we in Beit Sahur should know about his plans." Atrach raises a consideration that Myr ignores: Even if the land is developed by private investors, it would only be viable if "the chance to build is on an equal basis. If he could develop his land then we should be able to develop ours."

"If the Palestinians would be given a fair shake to build on the land, then perhaps it would be less problematic," says Daniel Seidman, the lawyer representing 29 Arab families in the Supreme Court case against the expropriation (in a case separate from Myr's).

However, Palestinians are skeptical about government promises to provide housing for them. "The purported building for the Arabs is misinformation in order to quell the uproar," said Seidman. "In May 1995, during previous expropriations, the government said it would expedite the granting of building permits in eastern Jerusalem. Not one additional building permit was given."

The law of confiscation

The government of Israel can expropriate land according to the "Land Laws (Needs of the Public), 1943. Owners of confiscated land are compensated according to the market value of their property. Many, however, do not recognize the validity of the expropriation and refuse to accept remuneration. The law states that if the finance minister needs property for public use, he can purchase it according to procedures outlined in the law. "Public need" is reflexively defined as "any need that the finance minister approves as a public need." A.K.

Rasan Andoni, of the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement, is a spokesman for all the Arab families with claims on Har Homa. He says that it is irrelevant whether the government or private owners

Two-thirds of the land expropriated at Har Homa belonged to Jews. One of them won't give up the fight for his property. Palestinians aren't quite sure what to make of David Myr and his plans, Amy Klein reports

develop Har Homa. "Building Har Homa will destroy Bethlehem. It will take the last areas of land," asserts Andoni. He claims that even if most of the Har Homa land is owned by Jews - a fact that he and other Arabs have disputed since the 1930s (see box) - they would never want Myr to build his "Peace Project."

"Mr. Myr asked the government to take the land," claims Andoni. "He was the one who initiated expropriation in the first place."

The story of how the expropriation came about is unclear. Six months before the government announced its intention to expropriate the land for Har Homa, the JNF, with the knowledge of Makor, wrote a letter to the Israel Lands Authority: "We should emphasize that the only way to move forward fast with the planning, building and completion of the neighborhood is by the consolidation of all the land in one hand. In order to fulfill this purpose there should be an 'acquisition by law' so that we can create the neighborhood as soon as possible." The Supreme Court, which also claims that the JNF and Makor asked for expropriation, replied that: "The ILA cannot expropriate lands of one owner in order to give it to another for the purpose of establishing a neighborhood."

Myr says that the JNF (and not Makor) had only asked for the "consolidation" of the land for development purposes, and not

published its intention to expropriate 1,850 dunams of land for its own Har Homa project, including land belonging to Myr.

With the outbreak of war in 1948, the case was dropped and not re-opened until 1967, when the disputed land was annexed to Jerusalem.

Ahmed Ali Sakhtour's land was sold without his knowledge. He was one of the few owners who had the necessary documentation to bring his case to court. There, Sakhtour disputed Hachsharat Hayishuv's maps and the original sale of the land and made a claim for 126 dunams.

By 1970, Makor and David Myr entered the picture, having purchased some of the lands in dispute. They had started their architectural plans to develop the "Peace Project." The Supreme Court distributed the land to the various claimants; Myr was awarded 563 dunams. In a 1987 appeal, the Supreme Court granted Sakhtour a total of 29 dunams, against his original claim of 126 dunams. In June 1991, the government expropriated Sakhtour's 29 dunams, along with Myr's 563. Sakhtour then joined his former opponent Myr in his suit against expropriation in order to get back his land - or what was left of it.

defense of then finance minister Yitzhak Moda'i's expropriation of the land. "According to the finance minister's opinion, there is very little probability that the owners of the land could develop the land in a reasonable amount of time, if at all. His assumption was that only the municipalities could carry out the responsibilities including the implementation, building and financing of the residential neighborhood."

It doesn't seem like anything will get in the way of the government's building Har Homa: After the government expropriated the land, it took only two months to develop building plans, as opposed to Myr's two decades. (Myr claims that his plans will save \$800 million in development of the project.) A government committee was scheduled to convene to reconsider the expropriation, but the meeting was cancelled.

Even the Supreme Court cases challenging the expropriation and development plans will not halt bulldozers, as no stop orders have been issued.

In the meantime, the Supreme Court's first decision of December 1994 still stands. It upholds the expropriation "in light of the fact that all new neighborhoods in Jerusalem since 1967 were set up in a similar fashion, i.e., expropriation of essential land to create a neighborhood."

Everyone - from the profit-oriented Myr to the politically motivated Seidman - agree on one thing: expropriation is the worst option. "If building will be done with fiat, and not with consultation," said Seidman, "you leave people no alternative but to feel cornered."

expropriation. Whatever the case, the government knew a good idea when it saw one, and six months later the government

"We had to expropriate the land in order to guarantee the establishment of the neighborhood," wrote the Supreme Court in

Whose land is it anyway?

Ownership of the land known today as Har Homa has been under dispute since 1935, when Sheikh Shihadeh sold 793 dunams of land, of which only 34 actually belonged to him. In fact, Shihadeh had sold the lands of other Arab families without their knowledge. A legal conflict erupted when the buyer, a pre-state company called Hachsharat Hayishuv (now owned by the private construction company Nimrod) tried to claim the land it had acquired.

With the outbreak of war in 1948, the case was dropped and not re-opened until 1967, when the disputed land was annexed to Jerusalem.

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BUSINESS

in brief

Bezeq pays NIS120 million in dividends

Bezeq yesterday paid its stockholders an intermediate dividend totaling NIS 120 million — or 40 percent of its net profit during the first six months of 1996. The payment per share is 16.4 agorot (or 16.4%). Acting Bezeq director-general Avi Hochman said that NIS 91.25m. would be transferred to the state, which owns 77% of Bezeq shares; the British company Cable & Wireless, which owns a tenth of the company, will receive NIS 11.84m. The rest will be divided among scores of other shareholders. Bezeq is required to pay a dividend each year equal to 55% of its annual net profit. The company has not yet published its financial reports for 1996. *Judy Siegel*

Telecom talks held with Jordan

The Israel-Jordan steering team for a joint telecom project met yesterday in Tel Aviv. Among the participants were heads of the Jordan Telecommunications Company and a Communications Ministry delegation headed by Haim Haviv. The team discussed proposed projects, including the laying of an optic fiber cable between Tel Aviv and Amman or along the Jordan Rift from Amman to Aqaba and links to the undersea optic fiber cable off Eilat. *Judy Siegel*

International Finance Institute courts Israel

The Institute of International Finance would like Israel to become a member, managing director Charles Dallara said yesterday in between meetings with the country's economic leadership. The IIF, a nonprofit association of financial institutions, conducts research on emerging markets, provides a forum for the private financial community, and lobbies in support of its members' positions regarding global regulatory issues. Bahrain, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are among the 14 Middle East countries and 45 nations worldwide whose banks, trading companies and/or export credit agencies belong to the institute. *Jennifer Friedlin*

Livnat seeks anti-piracy funds

The Communications Ministry has urgently asked the Treasury for more money to expand inspection teams looking for pirate radio stations, some of which cause dangerous interference with Ben-Gurion Airport's control towers. Currently, only three ministry employees are responsible for locating illegal broadcasting stations. Communications Minister Limor Livnat, now on a working visit in London, called Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy and asked for an urgent meeting early next week with the police and other ministry representatives to discuss the problem. *Judy Siegel*

EU agrees to energy tax plan

The European Commission agreed to a controversial draft law yesterday to raise the minimum taxes on motor and heating fuels and extend the taxes to electricity and natural gas. The plan is fiercely opposed by industry, particularly heavy-energy users such as the chemical and automobile sectors. EU finance ministers will have the final word — a task far from easy since they are required to reach a unanimous decision. It is widely seen as an attempt to introduce a failed carbon dioxide tax to reduce gas emissions by the back door. But European Commissioner Mario Monti, in charge of the bloc's border-free market and tax issues, said it was an unprecedented move to reform the Union's tax structure. *Reuter*

3 coalition MKs threaten to rebel after Generali deal

By DAVID HARRIS

Three coalition MKs are refusing to support various Treasury proposals to the Knesset Finance Committee, because it has approved the sale of Migdal Insurance to Assicurazioni Generali, the Italian company which refuses to pay out on life insurance policies of Holocaust victims.

MKs Michael Kleiner (Gesher), Avraham Herschson (Likud) and Nissim Dahan (Shas) said yesterday that until the Treasury corrects the situation they will not vote with the government, which means the opposition will effectively hold the majority in the powerful committee.

The three, who received the backing of MK Avner Shaki (an international lawyer), also said that if Generali does not come up with a serious proposal for compensation to the families of Holocaust victims before the

next Knesset discussion of the issue, they will demand a national boycott of Migdal and Generali.

Furthermore, Kleiner is calling on Finance Committee chairman Avraham Ravitz (United Torah Judaism) to call Finance Minister Dan Meridor to appear next week before the committee to explain how Insurance Commissioner Doron Shorer could approve the sale, and to ask the minister to do his utmost to persuade Generali to pay. Kleiner is also to request that Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon also attend the meeting.

Ravitz last night told *The Jerusalem Post* that he will be happy to consider such a proposal from Kleiner, but cannot confirm such a session until he has considered the issue in more detail. "If there proves to be substantiation for the claims, and I'm under the impression there will be, then of course we will consider the issue and call on

Dan Meridor to attend," said Ravitz.

"It cannot be that Sweden and Holland and others will investigate such claims and yet Israel continues to do business with Generali," said Dahan during yesterday's meeting of the Knesset Insurance sub-committee.

"We're not dealing with economic issues, but the very existence of the Jewish people," added Herschson, who chairs the Knesset Restitution of Jewish Property sub-committee. "In Britain they are running long television reports on the issue, in the US Congress a committee is examining the subject and yet here we're doing nothing. 'People are giving me policies to forward, what can I say to these people — that Israel is throwing them into the garbage?'"

Shorer again argued he doesn't have the legal wherewithal to object to the sale, which is eco-

nomically sound. The sale of Migdal by Bank Leumi is valued at more than \$300 million, one of the largest-ever deals involving the sale of an Israeli company.

Declaring no confidence in Generali's commitments to investigate claims, Kleiner, who chairs the Insurance sub-committee, said in his three terms as an MK he has never witnessed such a negative response to the authority of the Knesset as that currently displayed by Generali.

Generali's legal representative in Israel, Amihud Ben-Porat, defended his company's actions on the basis there is no legal grounds for payments.

However, he said the company will treat any specific requests from MKs with full respect and endeavor to answer written questions.

"This cannot be treated in purely economic terms," responded Shaki, "because these claims are so moral and correct."

Wages eroded by 9.2% in '96

By DAVID HARRIS

The average monthly wage last year rose by 1.2 percent in nominal terms, which means a 9.2% erosion in real terms, according to data published yesterday by the Central Bureau of Statistics.

The average wage ended the year at NIS 5,250. Some 2.163 million people were in jobs at the end of last year, a 4.6% increase from 1995.

When employees in Judea, Samaria and Gaza are included, the average wage fell to NIS 5,198, with a further 37,000 employed.

In terms of the total wages paid to workers, excluding the territories, there was a real-term decline of 6.6% in the last quarter of 1996, compared to the same period a year earlier. At the same time, the number of people employed rose 4%.

In the various industry sectors, wages shrank in real terms as follows: agriculture, education, banking, insurance and finance 7.8%; 7.9%; business services 6.6%; and public administration 6.2%.

Unemployment figures will be published today by the Employment Service department of the Labor and Social Affairs Ministry.

In recent months there has been a considerable increase in unemployment. Unemployment rose 0.4% in the fourth quarter to 7.3%, its highest level in the last two years according to bureau statistics. There has been an average quarterly unemployment increase of 2.5% since April, compared to reductions of 3.3% in the equivalent 1995 period.

Microsoft signs deal with firm in Petah Tikva

By DAVID HARRIS

Microsoft Corporation has signed a cooperation agreement with Petah Tikva-based software developer BackWeb Technologies to expand broadcast channel and delivery options for the American company's Internet Explorer 4.0 version, scheduled for release this summer.

Out of 19 companies around the world offering such Internet products, Microsoft chose the only Israeli company in the field.

BackWeb, established in 1995 by BRM and managed by Eli Bareket, allows Internet users to subscribe free to "channels" of information that appear on the screen while they're working and are clicked if the user wants to access them. Instead of having to seek out sites in the vast Internet, ones they have selected automatically appear periodically as icons on the screen when new information is available.

The agreement lays the groundwork for the joint creation of a BackWeb-based Microsoft Internet Explorer channel.

"BackWeb's client and server technology, integrated with Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0, is a perfect example of how firms can build on the open, standards-based technologies in Internet Explorer," said Brad Chase, Microsoft's vice president for marketing, Internet client and collaboration, in a statement from Los Angeles. "The power and control that BackWeb's easy-to-use server application gives channels for personalized broadcasting to Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0 clients will be a high-value complement to the browser's open broadcast capabilities."



Miners protest in Germany

Thousands of angry miners protest in Bonn yesterday against government plans of Economic Minister Guenter Rexrodt to reduce subsidies for hard coal mining. The signs read 'Our coal does not need an interim depot' (left) and 'Rexrodt is the death of the coal.' *(Reuter)*

COMPANY RESULTS

Tadiran's '96 profits more than treble

By GALIT LIPKIS BECK and JENNIFER FRIEDLIN

Tadiran, Israel's largest electronics company and a subsidiary of Koor Industries, reported a 236 percent increase in earnings to NIS 296 million last year from 1995, the company reported yesterday.

Net income for the year included a gain of \$33.7m. from the initial public offering of Tadiran Telecommunications. The subsidiary raised \$69m. from the offering.

However, fourth quarter net profits dropped 12.7% to \$9.6m. from \$11.1m. in the same 1995 period.

The company blamed the decrease on the registration of one-time tax revenues last year. Income after income taxes increased to \$13.3m. in the fourth quarter from \$12m. in the same period in 1995. Sales increased 6.5% to \$1.1b.

from \$1.05b. Revenues for the fourth quarter fell to \$268.5m. from \$283.1m. Exports represented more than 50% of fourth quarter sales.

Lower domestic sales and the economic slowdown led to a drop in sales from the telecommunications segment, the appliances and batteries segment and the electronic systems segment, the company said. The decrease in sales was partly offset by a rise in computer software segment sales.

Fourth quarter operating income fell to \$13.3m. from \$17.7m. Tadiran completed its reorganization last year, according to president and CEO Israel Zamir.

The company currently operates in five business segments — telecommunications, communications, electronic systems, appliances and batteries and computer software.

"Tadiran is now managed as a specialized strategic group. All activities have been absorbed by separate companies, each operating on profit and loss basis," he said.

Last year Tadiran Com. was formed to control the key defense activities of the communications group. Other decentralizations measures included the formation of Tadiran Electronic Systems, Tadiran Spectralink, Tadiran Telematics and Tadiran Batteries, said Zamir.

Elron Electronic Industries reported a 10% increase in annual net income to \$11.3m. last year from \$10.3m. in 1995. Aggregate annual revenues of the companies in the Elron group exceeded \$1.2 billion, similar to 1995.

In the fourth quarter, net income went up to \$3.8m. from \$3.1m. in the same period in 1995. The company said its earnings

resulted from three main sources: Elron's share in the net income of affiliated companies, gain on equity from a change in holdings and income from the sale of investments and holdings.

Elron CEO Uzia Galil said the company's plans for 1997 include honing in on the information technology market.

The company also said it hopes to be the fruits of Elbit's demerger this year. Elron owns 40% of each of the three companies, which were formed as a result of Elbit Ltd.'s 1996 demerger.

Based in Haifa, Elron is a multinational high-tech holding company that, through its affiliates, is engaged with a group of companies operating in the fields of medical diagnostic imaging, advanced defense electronics, communication, semiconductors, networking services and Internet software.

Discount Invest. buys stake in Nitzanim

By GALIT LIPKIS BECK

Discount Investments and its affiliate PEC, members of the IDB Group, have acquired Hevrat Ha'ovdim's shares in Nitzanim — the entrepreneurial center of the Nuclear Research center at Nahal Sorek.

The investment companies purchased 50 percent of Nitzanim for \$8.5 million. The remaining shares are owned by Isorad, the economic

arm of the research center, which is owned by the government.

Isorad is mainly engaged in adaptation of military know-how and techniques to civilian operations. Many of the country's hi-tech companies established over the past decade are based on know-how from the military and military industries, which have suffered from a drop in government budgets.

Nitzanim operates a technology incubator in the framework of the Office of the Chief Scientist at the Industry and Trade Ministry. Since its establishment four years ago,

ideas developed at the center have led to the establishment of 15 companies, including five that have raised capital from various institutions in Israel, France and the US to finance development and manufacturing phases.

The investment is part of Discount Investment's business strategy to expand its involvement in technology incubators as a method of expanding activities of its high-tech subsidiaries. The know-how accumulated by the incubators can be adopted for civilian use, the company said.

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT Public Tender No. 3/97 Provision of Outsourcing Computer Services

Bids are invited for the provision of outsourcing computer services. This notice is also being published in the Hebrew press, and the text of the Hebrew notice is to be regarded as definitive.

A. Information Required:

- Bidders must be organizations, registered in Israel, as required by law.
- Bidders must have had an annual turnover in the 1996 tax year of at least NIS25 million, from activities in outsourcing, managing computer installations, development and maintenance of software and Help Desk (excluding sale of hardware, and software licensing) as shown in the audited balance sheet.
- Bidders must have at least 40 salaried, full-time employees, working in the fields noted in Para. 2 above.
- Bidders must have at least two years' experience in outsourcing, and in fields similar to those referred to in the tender documents, obtained in working with at least two customers, the scope of the annual volume of work involved being at least NIS 1 million for each customer.
- In the context of Paras. 2, 3 & 4, the term, "bidder," includes a subsidiary company, with the requirements of these paragraphs applying to the parent company, there being close professional connections between the companies.
- The manager responsible for the provision of the services concerned must have at least 10 years' experience with computers and information systems, and at least 3 years' experience in managing systems and staff, he should have at least a first degree in a relevant field, and additional relevant training.
- Bidders will submit all the permits specified in the Public Business Companies Law (enforcement of the requirement to keep account books and to pay tax demands) 1976, and a certificate showing that the bidder is a registered trader, as defined in the Added Value Tax Law.
- Bids should be accompanied by an unconditional bank guarantee for NIS80,000, made out in favor of the Ministry of the Environment, and valid until 30.10.97.
- An agreement will be signed with the successful bidder, similar to the sample agreement attached to the tender documents.
- The agreement with the successful bidder will be for a period of five years, with an option for extension of two years.

B. The Ministry's Conditions

- Bids which are not in accordance with the tender conditions, or which do not have all the required documents attached will not be considered.
- No undertaking is given to accept any bid.
- No undertaking is given to accept the lowest bid.
- The right is reserved to cancel the tender, if the best bid does not meet the Ministry's requirements.
- The right is reserved to negotiate with those bidders competing for the tender, whose bids are found to be suitable.
- The successful bidder will be chosen, by reference to the following: the quality of the proposal, and its appropriateness for the purposes of the Ministry; the experience of the bidder, the financial standing of the bidder; an opinion of the bidder and the general impression obtained.
- The Ministry may choose two or more successful bidders.

C. General

- The tender documents and the specification may be obtained from the Ministry of the Environment, Banam Dept., 5 Rehov Kanfel Nesharim, Givat Shaul, Jerusalem, between 8:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., against payment of NIS2,000 (nonreturnable under any circumstances), which should be paid into the Account of the Ministry of the Environment at the Postal Bank, acc. no. 0-248488, earmarked for Tender No. 3/97.
- A meeting of bidders will be held on Thursday, March 27, 1997, at 9:30 a.m., at the Shelom Hotel, 25 Rehov Shahrul, Bayit Vagan, Jerusalem. Participation in this meeting is a condition of tendering.
- Bids should be submitted in five copies in Hebrew, in accordance with the *Maftah* Procedure, by 12 noon on 30.4.97, in a closed envelope marked "Tender No. 3/97," and placed in the tenders box in the Banam Dept., 5 Rehov Kanfel Nesharim (4th floor) Givat Shaul, Jerusalem.
- Bids may be submitted, only by those who have purchased the specification and the tender documents.

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ISRAEL DISCOUNT BANK

(707) TARGET 0770
Mutual Fund for Foreign Residents

Date: 11.3.97
Purchase Price: 163.37
Redemption Price: 161.02

למנוי פיא כיום

PRIME PRIME פריים פריים
Mutual Fund for Foreign Residents

Date: 11.3.97
Purchase Price: 114.89
Redemption Price: 113.40

למנוי פיא כיום

ISRAEL MONEY MARKETS				
Petah (foreign currency deposit rates) (11.9.96)				
Currency (deposit for)	3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS	
U.S. dollar (\$50,000)	4.75	5.00	5.375	
Pound sterling (£100,000)	3.75	4.00	4.25	
German mark (DM 200,000)	1.825	1.825	2.125	
Swiss franc (SF 200,000)	0.825	0.750	1.000	
Yen (10 million yen)				
(Rates vary higher or lower than indicated according to deposit)				
Shekel Foreign Exchange Rates* (12.3.97)				
CHECKS AND TRANSFERS		BANKNOTES		
Currency basket	Buy	Sell	Buy	Sell
U.S. dollar	3.6162	3.6748	—	3.8504
German mark	3.3420	3.3980	3.28	3.3730
Pound sterling	1.8629	1.8925	1.82	1.8717
French franc	5.3135	5.3683	5.22	5.2873
Japanese yen (100)	0.8200	0.8294	0.87	0.8868
Dutch florin	2.7215	2.7854	2.67	2.7477
Swiss franc	1.7584	1.7655	1.70	1.7172
Swedish krona	2.2866	2.3022	2.22	2.2570
Norwegian krona	0.4351	0.4422	0.42	0.4306
Denish krona	0.4857	0.4978	0.47	0.4848
Finnish mark	0.5131	0.5214	0.48	0.4948
Canadian dollar	0.6548	0.6654	0.64	0.6508
Australian dollar	2.4485	2.4850	2.40	2.4570
S. African rand	3.8517	3.9583	3.80	3.9170
Belgian franc (10)	0.7822	0.7844	0.76	0.7700
Austrian schilling (10)	0.9484	0.9637	0.93	0.9570
Italian lire (1000)	2.7803	2.8252	2.73	2.8057
Jordanian dinar	1.9589	1.9777	1.93	1.9573
Egyptian pound	4.6500	4.9700	4.85	4.7728
Israeli sheqel	0.9500	1.0300	0.85	1.03
Irish punt	3.8017	3.8531	3.85	3.9414
Spanish peseta (100)	5.1769	5.2504	5.08	5.2514
	2.3070	2.3443	2.28	2.3283

*These rates vary according to bank. **Bank of Israel.
SOURCE: BANK LEUMI

הכרזת הצבע

ISRAELI SHARES IN NEW YORK

Table with columns: AMEX, NASDAQ, and various stock symbols with their last prices and changes.

MISHTANIM LEADING 100 TASE ISSUES

Table listing the top 100 TASE issues with their last prices and percentage changes.

INTERNATIONAL SHARES

Table listing international shares with their last prices and percentage changes.

TASE ROUNDOUP

Table summarizing TASE market performance with key indices and their changes.

Indexes fall for third consecutive day

Mishtanim 249.47 ▼ 0.88% Maof 255.92 ▼ 0.88%

By FELICE MARANZ. Stock indexes fell for a third day yesterday as investors focused on February's consumer price index...

Table of Key Representative Rates: US Dollar, Sterling, Mark.

WORLD MARKET ROUNDUP

European bourses close sharply lower

LONDON (Reuters) - European bourses closed sharply down yesterday as Wall Street was hit by profit-taking with American investors jittery about the direction of interest rates...

Table of DOLLAR CROSSRATES (US) for various currencies.

WALL STREET REPORT

Blue-chip stocks take beating

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Blue-chip stocks fell sharply yesterday as the market paused after setting record highs the previous two sessions...

Table of LONDON METAL FIXES for various metals.

WHERE TO GO

Notices in this feature are charged at NIS 28.08 per line, including VAT. Includes information for Jerusalem Museums, Haifa, and Tel Aviv.

GENERAL ASSISTANCE

EMERGENCY PHARMACIES: Jerusalem: Amos, 9 Lab Yaffe, 673-1801. Haifa: 867-2222. Tel Aviv: 867-2222.

HAIFA

HAIFA WHAT'S ON IN HAIFA, dial 04-8374233. Includes listings for museums and events.

TEL AVIV

TEL AVIV MUSEUM, Andres Semano: The Morgue, Soviet Photography from the Museum collection...

HAIFA

HAIFA WHAT'S ON IN HAIFA, dial 04-8374233.

NEW YORK

Table listing New York market data and various stock prices.

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Table listing New York market data and various stock prices.

NEW YORK

Table listing New York market data and various stock prices.

NEW YORK MARKET INDEXES

Table listing New York Market Indexes with last prices and changes.

OTHER STOCK MARKET INDEXES

Table listing other stock market indexes with last prices and changes.

US COMMODITIES

Table listing US Commodities with last prices and changes.

LONDON COMMODITIES

Table listing London Commodities with last prices and changes.

SPOT MARKET METALS (US)

Table listing Spot Market Metals (US) with last prices and changes.

NEW YORK METAL FUTURES

Table listing New York Metal Futures with last prices and changes.

LONDON METAL FIXES

Table listing London Metal Fixes with last prices and changes.

SOURCE: S&P COMSTOCK (DATE 12-MAR-97)

DATA COMMUNICATIONS VIA

ABA COMPUTER SYSTEMS LIMITED. Foreign financial data courtesy of Comstock Trading Ltd.

FOREIGN FINANCIAL DATA COURTESY OF COMSTOCK TRADING LTD.

Foreign financial data courtesy of Comstock Trading Ltd. Includes listings for London, Paris, and Frankfurt.

LONDON

Table listing London market data and various stock prices.

PARIS

Table listing Paris market data and various stock prices.

FRANKFURT

Table listing Frankfurt market data and various stock prices.

CRITIC'S CHOICE

CLASSICAL MUSIC

MICHAEL AJZENSTADT

Ilan Schul replaces Mario Venzago, who canceled his performances with the Israel Symphony Orchestra...



Ilan Schul conducts Mendelssohn in Tel Aviv.

JAZZ

HELEN KAYE

Tenor saxophonist Ari Brown returns as the last star of the Jazz at the Museum series.

THEATER

HELEN KAYE

Cain't say no to Oklahoma!, the Light Opera Group of the Negev (LOGON) production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's all-time great classic musical...

The TheaterNeto festival and competition of monodramas kicks off tonight at Suzanne Dellal.

TV

- CHANNEL 1: 6:30 News flash, 6:31 News in Arabic, 6:45 Exercise Time, 7:00 Good Morning Israel...

- CHANNEL 2: 6:15 Today's Programs, 6:30 Sharkey and George, 7:00 Breakfast Magazine...

- CHANNEL 3: 6:30 Cartoons, 6:30 Nils Holgersson, 6:30 The Center of Things...

- JORDAN TV: 14:00 Holy Koran, 14:05 Carols, 14:45 Children's Show...

PRIME TIME TV

Table with columns for time slots (19:30, 20:00, 20:30, 21:00, 21:30, 22:00, 22:30, 23:00) and program titles like News, Sunset Beach, Edie & Pan, Candid Camera, Cafe Paris, The Commish, Dan Shilon Live, Backtrack, American Gothic, Now Me, Love Story with Yossi Systs, High Society.

Florida: 6:30 E! TV, 7:00 Kale and Alle, 7:30 Oprah Winfrey, 8:30 Picket Fences...

6:30 Open University (pt), 6:30 Open University (pt), 6:30 Open University (pt)...

6:30 Great Houses of the World (pt), 6:30 V.I.P. (pt), 6:30 V.I.P. (pt)...

6:00 Watersport World, 7:00 Table Tennis: Qatar, 8:00 Spanish Soccer League...

6:30 Bodies in Motion, 6:30 Bodies in Motion, 6:30 Bodies in Motion...

6:30 Motors (pt), 6:30 Figure Skating: US Championships, Nashville...

6:05 Morning Concert, 9:05 Bach: Violin concerto in A minor, Mendelssohn: Piano trio no. 2 in C minor...

6:30 Soccer: League of Champions - round-up, 7:30 Women's Baseball - semi-finals...

6:30 Motors (pt), 6:30 Figure Skating: US Championships, Nashville...



Team in action

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD with clues and grid

SOLUTIONS for cryptic crossword

QUICK CROSSWORD with clues and grid

QUICK CROSSWORD with clues and grid

MOVIES

JERUSALEM CINEMA: 7:00 The Ghost and the Darkness, 9:30 The Ghost and the Darkness... OR YEHUDA: 7:00 The Ghost and the Darkness...

Peres: Israel should hold its own summit

By MICHAL YUDELMAN

The Labor Party yesterday called on the Palestinians to return to the negotiating table and on both sides to prevent the escalation towards violence.

Labor yesterday convened an emergency meeting of its executive committee to discuss the grave deterioration in Israel's relations with the Arab states and the Palestinians. Labor also is preparing for the no-confidence motion to be presented against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government next Monday.

Labor Chairman MK Shimon Peres made it clear he would not take part in the international convention Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat is organizing in Gaza on Saturday, proposing another conference be held - with the same participants

- in Jerusalem one day later.

Peres said the crisis between Israel and the Arab world is the worst ever - both in scope and intensity - since the signing of the Oslo agreement a few years ago.

Earlier yesterday, Peres said, "This government's basic problem is not deciding to build in Har Homa or not, but the contradiction between the peace process and the government's position. Hence Netanyahu makes a gesture towards the Arabs one time, and towards the right wing another time. He's zigzagging: at one point he upsets one side, and at the next he upsets the other. You can't conduct a peace process in two contradictory directions at the same time."

Peres said that relations between Israel and the Arabs "had been different and could be different."

He noted that contrary to Netanyahu's statements, "he did not inherit a bad security situation, but a very good one. Arafat had quashed terrorism two months before the elections, and has been keeping it down since."

"We too built in Jerusalem, but there is a way to build houses, not scandals. Much can be done wisely, gradually, not with drum beating and trumpets. Netanyahu has mobilized the whole world against us in the Jerusalem issue, both in the tunnel affair and now, with contradictory, confusing statements."

Labor MK Yossi Beilin said that if Netanyahu announces his intention to evacuate 10 percent of the territory and put off the construction in Har Homa until after the permanent settlement, Labor would not join the no-confidence motion next Monday.

Journalists protest government incitement against them

By MICHAL YUDELMAN

The Tel Aviv Journalists Association yesterday warned of violence against their number, in view of the increasing incitement against the media by senior officials in the government.

The Association expressed disappointment at the silence of Attorney-General Elyakim Rubinstein and State Prosecutor Edna Arbel following the calls of "death to the media" in the Likud central committee meeting last week.

The Association may file police complaints against senior figures, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, association chairman Arye Avneri of *Yediot Aharonot* said at a press conference yesterday.

"Never has an Israeli government attacked and incited against the media as this one has," Avneri said.

Avneri said he gave a list of statements by senior figures to legal advisors to examine whether official police complaints can be lodged against them for incitement, to start an investigation.

Association director Razi Guterman expressed concern over prime minister's office director-general Avigdor Liberman's statements to the effect that he will "settle accounts" with certain journalists and that there are journalists who must be kicked out. He said Netanyahu should have hushed the people shouting 'death to the media' at the Likud gathering. Instead, his spokesman said Netanyahu had heard or said nothing

against the media. "But we all saw him, in re-run broadcasts, responding to these calls."

Guterman said Netanyahu's obsession since being elected prime minister has been attacking the media. "Criticizing the media is legitimate, but inciting against journalists is dangerous to the freedom of expression and to democracy," he said.

The speakers also protested against the investigation into the "leak" of the cabinet protocol in the Bar-On Affair, noting that the attorney-general was formerly cabinet secretary and knows the routine of "leaks" from cabinet meetings. Already there is evidence that the inquiry has "dried up" information sources, who fear being interrogated. This obstructs journalists' work, Avneri said.



Equal opportunity play

MK Adisu Massala (Labor) poses yesterday with two nursery-school pupils in Ramle and part of the first shipment of some 500 dark-skinned dolls he organized from donors in the US. Massala said the dolls, to be distributed at nursery schools throughout the country, are to provide all children, not only those of Ethiopian origin, with a more natural choice of play objects.

(Dan Ossendryver/Israel Sun)

WEATHER

Jerusalem 10-17
Tel Aviv 12-19
Haifa 10-22
Tiberias 10-22
Afula 9-23
Sameria 10-18
Beersheba 11-22
Dead Sea 14-24
Eilat 12-27
Cohin 9-18

Forecast: Partly cloudy.

AROUND THE WORLD

City	Low	High	Forecast
Amsterdam	02	10	cloudy
Berlin	02	08	cloudy
Buenos Aires	02	14	cloudy
Caro	09	24	cloudy
Chicago	-08	27	cloudy
Copenhagen	01	04	cloudy
Frankfurt	04	08	clear
Geneva	04	08	clear
Helsinki	02	05	clear
Hong Kong	21	28	clear
Jakarta	15	19	clear
London	11	02	clear
Los Angeles	10	24	cloudy
Madrid	07	14	clear
Moscow	-10	14	clear
Munich	02	08	clear
New York	08	15	clear
Paris	09	15	clear
Rome	04	17	clear
Stockholm	03	07	clear
Sydney	18	27	clear
Toronto	08	15	clear
Vienna	05	17	clear
Zurich	05	11	cloudy

Fighting in zone

Hizbullah guerrillas fired mortar rounds at a South Lebanese Army unit on patrol in the security zone's eastern sector last night. No casualties or damage were reported. IDF and SLA units returned fire.

(Tim)

Panther helicopter fleet joins the navy

By ARIEH O'SULLIVAN

Four new Panther helicopters officially joined the Israel Navy yesterday, giving it a new generation of enhanced weapons systems believed to greatly extend its offensive arm. A fifth helicopter is to be delivered shortly.

The Panther, known in Hebrew as *Atalef* (bat), replaces the sea-based Dolphin, one of which crashed at sea last September killing all three of its crew. The deal cost the IDF \$63 million.

Three of the blue and gray Panthers flew yesterday into the Ramat David Air Base, led by the navy's last remaining Dolphin. Families of the pilots and invited guests gathered on the sunny tarmac applauded as the squadron's emblem was affixed to the aircraft.

"This is a day which strengthens the navy, the air force, and the IDF," said OC Air Force Maj.-Gen. Eitan Ben-Eliyahu. "A lot of missions await you, but go slowly... from tomorrow the ceremonies will be over, and you return to training and to operations if the need arises; do it as best as you can."

The ceremony was somewhat marred by the often-noted



A Panther helicopter lands on the deck of a Sa'ar missile ship. (IDF Spokesman)

absence of the crew of the ill-fated Dolphin, including Lt.-Col. Benzi Bachar, who saw the project from its inception and was to have led the first Panther squadron.

"My husband used to say, 'This is all we have and we have to win with it,' and this is what I'm trying to do," said Bachar's widow, Shlomit. "It's painful and happily moving at the same time."

The atmosphere in the air force since 73 servicemen were killed in the February 4 collision between two transport helicopters is still heavy. Ben-Eliyahu refused to be interviewed by the media and had actually ordered IDF spokesmen not to allow journalists to approach him.

"Something happened in the air force among the helicopter force," said Lt.-Col. Z, the Panther squadron commander. "There is no doubt the Yasur helicopter tragedy was a blow to the squadron... When you're getting back to routine, this national mourning hits you and it of course causes difficulties and uncomfortable feelings," he said.

The Panther is an updated version of the Dolphin. Known by its integral tail rotor, the Panther is a new-generation aircraft that will enhance the weapons systems on navy missile boats by expanding their visible horizon and guiding anti-ship Harpoon missiles to their targets. They will also hunt submarines and carry out search and rescue operations.

The navy purchased the French-designed Panther from the American Eurocopter Corp.

Built by the French Aerospatiale company, the Panther replaces the Dolphin, which has been in service since 1985.

The purchase of the Panthers found the navy embroiled in controversy, when it was discovered Israel paid nearly \$12 million more than it should have, with Israeli and American intermediaries pocketing the difference. At least three people were convicted of fraud and Vice-Adm. (res.) Alex Eyal, former director of procurement for the navy, has been questioned over the sales scheme.

The Panther's three-man crew is made up of a pilot, navigator, and a communications officer. The Panther takes off from and lands on a small aft platform on the navy's cruiser class Sa'ar 4.5 and Sa'ar 5 missile ships, nicknamed "the smallest aircraft carriers in the world."

The cooperation between the air force and navy lets the chopper be maintained at sea. The Panther is based on the Dolphin's original mid-1970s design, but its problematic US-built engine has been replaced with a more powerful French one. Its avionics have all been upgraded a generation.

Chopper crash report delayed

By ARIEH O'SULLIVAN

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai agreed yesterday to a request for an extension by the commission of inquiry into the February 4 collision of two transport helicopters that killed 73 servicemen.

The report, which was to have been completed by March 20, will now be presented on April 15, the Defense Ministry said.

Commission head David Ivry requested the delay in response to demands by the attorneys of four officers, who may face disciplinary action due to the commission's findings, that the commission hear more testimony.

Ivry said the collection of evidence was in its final stages, but that the committee found itself obligated to allow the four officers the right to a hearing and to call witnesses before the commission.

Two weeks after the crash, the inquiry presented an interim report which noted that murky regulations may have led to the crash.

Ivry's letter said the commission would try very hard to keep the extended investigation to less than a month. Copies of the letter also were sent to Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak and Judge Advocate General Brig.-Gen. Uri Shoham.

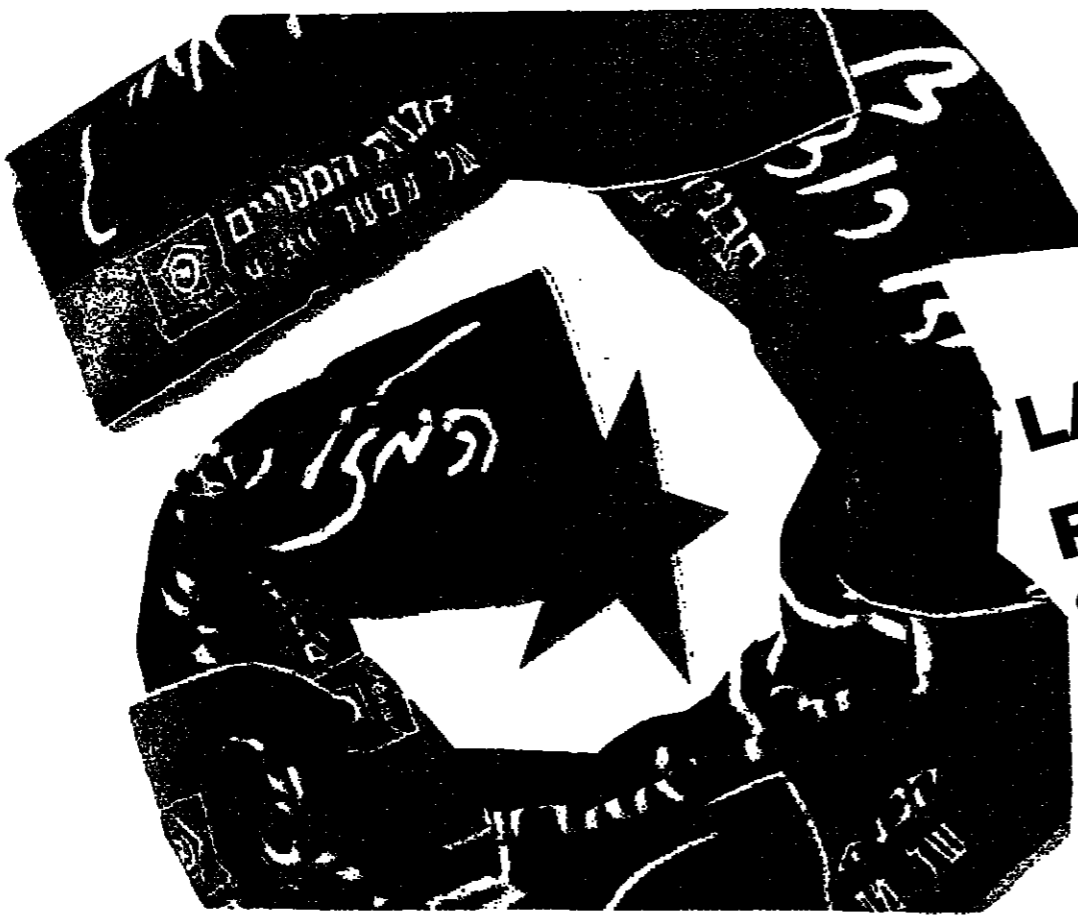
The four officers involved were questioned under caution and have sought legal counsel. They are exercising their right to summon witnesses before the commission. Apparently they intend to fight to clear their names from the hint of responsibility the commission has placed on them for faults that may have led to the crash.

It is expected that the officers will summon senior commanders, including OC Air Force Maj.-Gen. Eitan Ben-Eliyahu, who has reportedly sought legal counsel.

The four officers are Brig.-Gen. G, commander of the Tel Nof air base, where the CH-53 squadrons are based; Yasur squadron commander Lt.-Col. E.; E.'s deputy, Maj. Y.; and the operations officer for the Galilee Panhandle, Brig.-Maj. A.

Winning cards

The winning cards in yesterday's daily Mifal Hapayis Chance draw were the ace of spades, jack of hearts, eight of diamonds and jack of clubs.



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